आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, I.89.i

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

General Editors

K. M. MUNSHI
R. R. DIWAKAR

143

ALVARS OF SOUTH INDIA

By

K. C. VARADACHARI

5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, iddas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7 The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Shishya* attitude by the development of—

(i) respect for the teacher,

(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8 The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form or attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 1/75*.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily

* Since raised to Rs. 2.50.

accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita* by H.V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita* which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, Queen Victoria Road,
New Delhi, K. M. MUNSHI
3rd October 1951.

PREFACE

Āḻvārs are South Indian Śrī Vaiṣṇava Mystics. A systematic philosophy of mysticism was developed by them in their Hymns. No account of Indian mysticism would be complete without knowing something about these. All of them belonged to the first millennium after Christ. There have been some excellent works about them but none which gives a detailed account of their work. The Bhakti movement in India owes its orgin to them. The present work undertakes to elucidate the contribution made by these great mystics.

Though the general gist of this work has been published in the Journal of the Sri Venkatesvara Oriental Institute during the years 1950-51, and other research journals, this is an original work, having been rewritten. The author expresses his deepest thanks to the several editors of the Journals who have permitted him to use the published material.

He takes this occasion to express his deep debt of gratitude to Professor P. Sankaranarayanan for having gone through this work and for having suggested many modifications.

K. C. VARADACHARI

Sri Rajagriha,
Tirupati.

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INTRODUCTION

The mystic philosophy of the South Indian Āḻvārs has not been studied as fully as it merits. Their philosophy however played a very important role in the shaping of the religious life of the people of the South.

The Āḻvārs seem to have flourished between the 2nd century A.D. and 8th century A.D. Traditional accounts place them at the beginning of the Kali Yuga, that is about the second millennium B.C. Professor S. Vaiyapuri Pillai has come to the conclusion that the Āḻvār period falls between the 7th and 9th centuries A.D. In any case the Āḻvārs lived before 900 A.D.

The Āḻvār philosophy is deeply indebted to the Vedic and Purānic scriptures and is seeping with the mythomysticism characteristic of the latter. The Āḻvārs were also conversant with the *āgamas (pancarātra)* which provided them with the concrete worship of the icons.

The importance of a study of these Āḻvārs not only makes one understand the spiritual climate of the devotional school *(bhakti)* in its origins but also supplies the philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita with a background. They are one of the two important sources of the later system of Śrī Rāmānuja, the other being the *Upaniṣads (Vedanta)*. It is perhaps true that but for these mystical religious hymns of the Āḻvārs, the unique *anubhava* or experience open to all devotees of God would not have received any fillip. It is also likely that the Śaiva school of *bhakti* as sung by its Nāyanmārs during the same period (700-900 A.D.) also received and gave impetus to the growth of a devotional approach to God all over the South. Later it tended to move upward to North India where it flourish-

ed through the various devotional sects of Caitanya, Kabir and others.

Mysticism has been one of the most fascinating phenomena in spiritual experience. It is undoubtedly also the most important for a proper evaluation of the springs of religious experiences. Much is known about religions, but not in regard to mystical experiences. Therefore many mature minds have turned towards a scientific study of mystical experience in order to find out the truth about it.

Mysticism has been defined in many ways. The word 'mystic' is said to be derived from *muo*, a Greek root which means 'experience that comes when one closes one's lids and lips.' It is an experience that comes to one when one meditates or practises *dhyāna*. It may mean *mauna* or silence. When one practises the silent mind, then one begins to experience the transcendent reality of oneself and later on of others. It is an experience that is beyond the grasp of the senses or the mind itself and, as such, it is incapable of being expressed in language or words. The Ultimate Reality has been held by mystics to be thus beyond the grasp of the senses and speech. Some have held that it is beyond the reach of life itself or breath and mind. Thus transcendental supersensory experience that comes about owing to the silencing of the mind or to a silent or quiet mind is what has been taught by the Mystics of the Upaniṣads, the Ṛṣis. It is therefore accepted on all hands that the Upaniṣads are the most mystical of ancient religious literature in the World. The hallmark of transcendental truth is therefore its mystical measure.

Mysticism is also defined as the direct unmediated experience of God. Reason cannot help us to reach it. It can be known, seen and entered into only by a trans-

cendent process of revelation, or flashes of insight or intuition. It is called *sākṣātkāra,* or direct experience. It is called *anubhava* or *aparokṣānubhūti.* It is characterised by the overwhelming sense of reality of the Transcendent, reducing all our sensory and other experiences to a level of *māyā* or magical reality or illusion or worthlessness. The reality of God in the mystical experience does two things: firstly its utter transcendence reduces the world to a level of illusion or worthlessness, and secondly, it makes the attainment of God or the Ultimate Being the one abiding concern of the individual even at the cost of complete identification of oneself with Him or loss of oneself. The mystical experience goes beyond the level of all realities of nature, soul and God too, and arrives at that supreme Oneness which is the womb of all. But this is more an assertion of the mystical experience at its highest than a metaphysical explanation.

Mystic experiences are also characterised by an experience of unadulterated bliss or ecstasy. The bliss experienced by the mystic at the moment of his realisation of that state of oneness or union with the Ultimate is transcendental happiness based on peace *(śānti,),* a peace that is the end of all struggles and contradictions, of puzzlements and so on. One attains a condition of spiritual illumination *(jnāna),* and spiritual freedom *(vairāgya),* which are the first intimations of immortal existence. One is said to swim in the ocean of knowledge and bliss. It is also one of deep love and intimacy with the Ultimate Being which grants to the individual in that condition a sense of real existence or living as a full being. Bliss is not mere pleasure or sense of absence of pain but a positive experience of union with the Ultimate Reality which is recognized as Existence (truth), Awareness (consciousness) and Infinitude and Immorta-

lity (which constitute bliss, *ānanda*). All mystics experience this unearthly bliss in the highest *yoga* (union).

Mystic bliss has been explained in beautiful terms by the seers who have claimed that all things in this universe live and move and have their being in bliss. The highest self has been almost equated with this bliss and the attainment of Self and attainment of bliss are identical.

Transcendental mysticism goes beyond the levels of human experience and remains sometimes beyond the expressions which man can understand. When such experiences however are vouchsafed to him, he either remains dumb and wondering or he tries to express them in human language and sign. We have many mystics who have held this transcendental mysticism to be the attainment of the dark Divine or Underground. This mysticism has been beyond the religious level and therefore religious appropriation of mysticism appears to be a lower level mysticism in so far as it seeks to make mysticism identical with religion. Religious experiences originally centre round the mystical flashes of divine uncovering of the transcendent. They seek to unite themselves with this transcendent condition. The religious men do get into intimate oneness with God but it is the realisation of the relationship with God that the soul experiences. We may perhaps say that mysticism is the experience of God in which the individual soul dissolves in deepest union and so has the experience of God as He is in Himself, whereas in religious experience it is the experience of God by the individual as God is for the individual in His fullest plenitude. Thus mysticism leans towards identity whereas religious experience leans towards organic unity or union. The religious mysticism is thus the experience of union by the individual with God in

all his plenitude and fullness. This is the experience of *rasa* (essence) or aesthetic fullness and fulfilment of man in God.

Broadly speaking, the *bhakti* schools are suffused with religious mysticism rather than pure mysticism. Religious mysticism has much concern with the personality of God, whereas pure mysticism is concerned with the inward enjoyment of God in essence. It is with the supremely transcendent aspect of God that it enters into ecstatic trance.

The religious mysticism that we find in the Āḻvār literature is deeply devotional. It is clear that all these saints are profoundly soaked in the love of the personality of God and His superhuman deeds in the world of men. God's love for His creation and creatures is shown to be immeasurably greater than what man can bear towards Him. Wonder, awe, love and faith mingle with each other to work up an alembic of purest intensity of self-giving and seeking God for His own sake. This latter culminating point is the sign of developing mysticism. Union with the Godhead in all His infinite manifestations and works leads to the mystic absorption in God to the point of loss of one's own consciousness and existence. In fact the return to one's own consciousness is seen to be a kind of fall and separation from God. Many exquisite hymns are devoted to reveal this suffering that befalls a saint when he seems to become aware of his condition without the Divine or bereft of the Divine.

That this religious mysticism is a valuable thing no one would deny. The awareness of the personality of God is all-important. Impersonality of Reality is not however advanced by these seers and saints, for they could hardly conceive of any impersonal reality unless it be something assumed as a name for the Reality as

It is in and for Itself. Even pure mysticism cannot affirm this, for that too seeks a transcendence over the individual in God, which is held to be a union developing into absorption.

The characteristics of religious mysticism should be clear from a deep study of the Āḻvār literature. These saints had had a tradition, the tradition of the Upaniṣads and the Vedas, along with the Purāṇas and *āgamas* which describe the exploits of God in His several incarnations. These exploits of God are concrete events and not general qualities, and have relevance for man. The reality of God is always not in an idealisation but in the actual impact of God in the life of man. The Purāṇas provide the fullest evidence of God's constant activity and participation in man's life.

The close acquaintance with the lore of the Purāṇas along with the abiding contemplation on the intuitive revelational truths which are illustrated and exemplified by the deeds of Godhead in the terrestrial world of men had together inspired these saints to rehearse the glory of God. They form the substance of their devotional contemplation which is continuous and steady. This leads to concentration and becomes the sole vocation of the saint. It leads to vision of the Divine in all His consummate splendour. There are indeed many instances in these hymns where the contemplation through inspired song culminates in the Vision, and that leads to the final entry of the soul of the saint into the very body of God, to become part and parcel of His divine body. The saints have entranced feelings and ecstatic contemplations. The religious experience of both holiness and numinous awareness is something that seems to be the universal characteristic of all these saints and mystics.

The understanding of the psychology of these saints

would briefly involve the consideration of the nature of the object of their contemplation. The saints and mystics of the South, especially the Āḻvārs, seem to be convinced that God is not merely the Absolute Transcendent, but beyond all characteristics and all determinations, the Unconditioned, known only through Transcendent Experience. Undoubtedly such an experience exists for pure mystics. That is beyond all possibility of human knowing and human love. The Āḻvārs, on the other hand, have felt that that Transcendent Being is verily also the one who is the Godhead whom mankind knows and loves, for He is with man and revealing Himself to man. His incarnations or miraculous intercessions have revealed that God is also immanent or within the creation while remaining transcendent—immanent in the historical sense. God created the Universe and entered into it or rather is constantly entering into it to keep it on the path of *dharma*. Thus it is recognized that God is transcendent and immanent, and historically regulating the creation through His divine births. These are the minimum presuppositions needed to explain the historical Godhead whom the saints have had the privilege of encountering in their devotions. Āḻvārs seem to have accepted the *āgama* version of the incarnation of God in addition to the already held Vedic conception of God as transcendent and immanent. The Purāṇas had provided the ground for the acceptance of the historical descents for the resuscitation of *dharma*. The *Bhagavad Gītā* (*Mahābhārata*) and the *Rāmāyaṇa* had also provided for the acceptance of the historical Godhead. These have been crowned by the acceptance of the iconic worship of the Godhead. The Āḻvārs held that the supreme Godhead out of love for all His creatures incarnated and could incarnate in icons so that man could have easy

access to Him. In every way the basic presupposition was that God is accessible, is the very incarnation of love and righteousness; in one word, He is Grace. Illimitable grace is God and on this firm belief they founded their whole method of approach or *yoga*.

This is the concept that led them to see in every thing that the Divine was and did and was doing the divine love which overpowers the nature of man wholly.

Beauty of God was like ambrosia and undiminishing in its nature and power over the heart and head of man and woman and all nature. The secret of beauty was discovered by man through devotional dedication and intuitive awakening.

Religious mysticism found excellence of experience in and through the supersensory beauty of God's personality. So much so, again and again, the Āḻvār cries out, "Having beheld thy beauty my eyes have no place for anything else besides." "My eyes having seen thee cannot see anything else." They were such who became blind to all that was not His beauty, deaf to all that was not His voice and word, and ignorant of all that was not His knowledge. Mystic religion undoubtedly leads one to the concept of liberation or *mukti*. Experience of God itself became liberation, not merely a step towards it. Service of God itself was liberation from the cycle of births and deaths. Such was their faith and their love that they refused to go beyond God, or away from God.

Āḻvārs also, once for all time, laid the lines of development for the practice of religious mysticism or *bhakti*. The ways of realising the manifold personality of God were also beautifully expressed in their hymns and can be shown to follow the well-tested canons of *bhakti*-methodology laid down by the Purāṇas and Itihāsas. The *bhakti* so cultivated however is not just a copying of the

methods of those excellent works which contain the experiences of so many of the earlier devotees of God. Unique developments of devotion are clearly seen in these hymns. The hymnal literature seems to have developed spontaneously even as in the case of the Vedic mantras which flowed out of spontaneous vision and audition of the Ṛṣis. This is similar to the songs or psalms of other religious mystics in the world.

The religious mystic is one who is supremely aware of the beauty of the world in the vision of God though he is equally conscious of its illusory and deluding nature when considered apart from God's immanence and historical presence. The South Indian religious mystic is however very much aware of the iconic presence of God in the temples. For him the icon is a real, speaking and communicating presence of God and not merely a sign or *liṅga* or *pratīka* of God mediating between the need for a sign of presence and the presence itself. This is rather extraordinary in mysticism and yet it must be said that the consistency with which the experience of God had happened in and through the icons which they worshipped leads one to assert that this kind of worship has sanctity and reality. The enjoyment of God in iconic representations shows the supreme possibility of Godly presence in material objects under circumstances defined by the seers themselves. Devotion, according to these saints, makes God do even the impossible and reveals God's supreme omnipotency.

These seers of God who are also lovers of God have opened up a great chapter in Indian spiritual Renaissance. The mystic idea of God as organic with Nature and soul is one of the profound insights which gave rise to the development of a theism that has been the inspiration to all later thinkers and philosophers. This in-

sight already formulated by Yājñavalkya and stated in dynamic yogic language by the *Bhagavad Gītā* was mystically verified by the Āḻvārs. Nāthamuni recognized this unique contribution of the Āḻvārs and above all of St. Śaṭhakopa, who has been since then known as the Kulapati of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vaiṣnavism. He therefore became the founder of the new school of *bhakti* which made surrender to God and God alone with His Śrī *(śreyas-śakti)* the means to God-experience *(divya-anubhava).* He made God alone the object of his meditations and songs, hence his entire works were known as *Bhagavad-viṣaya* (having God as the content of his songs and meditations).

Nāthamuni seems to have collected and codified or arranged them and made arrangements to have them sung in the temples so as to aid the devotees in their own meditations and songs.

His grandson Yāmunācārya had further helped the spread of these songs, and it was left to Rāmānuja to have a steady flow of devotees undertake this *sādhana* or method of worship and experience. He also had the commentary on the *magnum opus* of Nammāḻvār or St. Śaṭhakopa, as he was called by the devotees, so that the devotees could contemplate on the excellent deeds of God as experienced by St. Śaṭhakopa. It seems clear that it is necessary to know the method and manner of contemplation rather than mechanically repeat them or sing them. Poetic excellence there abundantly is in these hymns and many poetic critics have seen the flawless perfection of St. Śaṭhakopa's poetic art. It is however the delicate delineations of the grace or love of God that lifts the poetry to sublimity or dedicated passion. Its spontaneous induction of intuitive union with God is its more important and pregnant role. It is necessary to

read these mystic hymns in the context of developing yogic-consciousness or awareness to God's supreme self-giving to man in all glory. The spread of Rāmānuja's teachings in religion and philosophy meant also the spread of the mystical literature of the Āḻvārs on which his teachings were based. The revelations of the Āḻvārs had the same or equal sanctity for him as the authoritative texts of the Vedas and Upaniṣads. The truths of both were considered to be capable of being considered to be same if not just complementary to one another or capable of being synthesized or harmonized. Thus the basic background of the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy of religion was the composite and harmonized truths of Veda and Āḻvār-hymns. Thus arose what has been known as *ubhaya-vedānta* (the two Vedāntas) harmonized to form a unitary system of philosophy and religion.

Thus the mystical tradition was synthesized to form a synthetic mystic religious philosophy. The roots of such a conception were already present in the literature of the Āḻvārs.

As we study each of the Āḻvārs it will become clear that their awakened insights embraced the whole of reality as pervaded by the divine light and grace, and each one of them was revealing a new facet or point of view, not partial but integral with every other.

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST THREE ĀLVĀRS AND THE MYTH

The story of the Āḻvārs has an interesting beginning. The first three Āḻvārs known as Poygai, Pūtattār and Pey were born miraculously of flowers. Poygai was born of the golden lotus in the tank (Poygai) near Yathoktakāri temple in Kāncī. He was also known as Sārayogi or Kāsārayogi.* Pūtattār was born of *kurukkatti* flower at Mahābalipuram. Pey was born of the red lotus in the tank at Mylāpore (Madras).

They were going from temple to temple in search of God and for worshipping Him and having His vision. They chanced to meet under a common roof in the temple city, *Tiruk-Koil-ūr*, when there was a heavy downpour of rain. The first to seek shelter in the small room of a house was Poygai. The dimension of this room was such that it was fit for one man to lie down in it. Soon after the second Āḻvār Pūtattār entered and seeking admission he said that where there was lying space for one there can be room for two men to sit. So the two sat, when the third Āḻvār Pey entered saying that where two can sit three can stand. So all the three stood in that small room waiting for the rain to stop. At this juncture, it is narrated, they began to feel the presence of a fourth person, who was invisible. But this invisible person they described as the Supreme Being by which everything lives and moves and has its being.

The first Āḻvār (Poygai) intuited God's existence through his transcendent knowledge (*parajñāna*); the second (Pūtattār) through maturing gnosis passing into devotion (*parā-bhakti*); and the third (Pey) through the

* cf. *Dehalīśa Stuti:* Venkatanatha and the Guruparampara.

intuitive conjoinment of knowledge and devotion (*parama-jñāna*) attained the supreme vision of His Form with His Spouse (Divine Mother). Tradition has it that the goal of all these three ways of knowing is One only. The path of intuitive knowledge and the path of intuitive devotion and the path of intuitive transcendent love are not three different or separable ways. They form one unitary growth in realisation. Gnosis-knowledge, not inferential knowledge, passes imperceptibly into devotion for the Divine, and this in turn progressively becomes love-knowledge that is capable of knowing the Divine in His Fullness, that is to say with the Mother Divine. This is one way of reading this myth.

A second and deeper analysis of the above story will be also interesting. The inferential method or the modes of intellect cannot prove the transcendent divine nor can they ever prove that there is a being who is the Cause of the Universe as a whole, and even if it were so capable, it cannot prove that that Cause is both the material and the efficient cause. This has been upheld ably by the Vedāntic teachers in their interesting commentaries on the Vedānta Sūtras (I.i.3: *Śāstrayonitvāt*). Scriptural testimony alone can be availed of to prove the unity of material cause and efficient cause in Brahman. Inference that claims that the real power of the Lord is revealed in His works on the analogy of the carpenter or potter is incapable of proving that the Divine Eternal Being is necessary for creation. The uniformity of Nature reveals at best that it is a principle of universal order which might demand the postulate of a Divine Maker or legislator, who somehow through His power as Ruler controls the processes of the Universe. It is not easy for any mind even the most primitive, to be without asking about the cause of the Universe or its pro-

cesses or changes. The cause-effect problem whether it is argued from the standpoint of non-existent effects theory (*asatkārya-vāda*) or the potential existence of effect theory (*sat-kārya-vāda*) must prove one of two things, either the efficient causality of the creative maker who confers on matter the forms that are ideally in Him as eternal forms or Ideas or Order, or the material causality of continuity of evolution of forms such as are potentially to be discovered in it by the maker or by its own natural inward stress and strain or goal (*svabhāva*).

The inwardness or residence of the ideas of order must either be in the efficient cause or in the material cause. If the efficient cause is something that is external to or other than the material cause, one must presume that the efficient cause, because of its natural power (*svabhāva-śakti*) is capable of endowing the material with its ideas so as to make them real in it. But it is always right to argue that we cannot endow a material with a form or a form with a body of matter which that material cannot take. One cannot make a statue of water or a vessel of water or fire or air. These are the limitations of matter. They restrict the creative activity of the maker. We cannot divorce these two capacities or limitations. This being so, the solution to the problem seems to lie in a different direction. The efficient creator or Maker knows the nature of matter as it is in itself so as to be able to shape it. This is the problem of knowledge and, if our knowledge were to be essentially of this inferential order, it is insoluble. All that we can therefore say about this knowledge of the Transcendent to the intellect or inferential apparatus is that it requires another mode of knowing and that is the Scriptural knowledge and the Gnosis or *Śruti*. The three Āḻvārs thus described the Divine not through knowledge got

through perception and inference, but through *Śruti-anubhava* that came to them when all the three pressed against each other. It is as it were the *Soma* that was pressed out of the triple strands of intuitive knowledge, intuitive devotion and intuitive love.

Without this deep intuitive approach, it is even impossible to appreciate the beauty and glory of the Creation of God which is a miracle of process. The poetic expression of Āḻvārs like that of the Ṛṣis of the Veda comes from the *Śruti* to *upamāna* rather than proceeding from analogy to *Śruti.**

Analogical inference, as a *pramāṇa* or means of right knowledge, is incapable of going beyond the perceived. It exceeds its limits when it adopts the procedures of the ordinary inference (*anumāna*) by arriving at a concomitant variation (*vyāpti*) that is invariable. Poetic analogy is however that which suffers from a contrary defect in so far as it perceives partial similarities and assumes complete identity or emphasizes through suggestion such complete identities. Reality that is creative manifestation of the Infinite is grounded in Wonder: "One sees Him as a wonder; another speaks of Him as a wonder; another hears of Him as a wonder; yet having heard none understands Him."** In the higher understanding, it is not the laws of Nature that we have to seek in order to conquer it, but the mystery of creative unfoldment or manifestation in the wonderful co-exis-

* My Presidential Address to the Metaphysics Section of the Indian Philosophical Congress 1947, Banaras, *Critique of the Pramāṇas.*

** *Bhagavad Gita* II. 29:

आश्चर्यवत् पश्यति कश्चिद् एनम्
आश्चर्यवद् वदति तथैव चान्यः ।
आश्चर्यवच्चैनम् अन्यः शृणोति
श्रुत्वाऽप्येनं वेद न चैव कश्चित् ।।

tence of contrasts strewn *ad infinitum* in plenteous measure everywhere. Miracle is the differentium between the natural and the supernatural or transcendent order: the natural order assumes its autonomy; the supernatural reveals that the natural autonomy is subordinate again and again in its vastness as well as in minuteness to the Transcendental. Both indeed comprise the Universe. The Divine Order however reveals itself to the sensitive mystic minds in the natural in order to reveal the unbounded greatness and power and superiority of God's unceasing will and relation to the Universe.

All philosophy, nay, all religion, begins in wonder and ends there. We can see that this integrative appreciation of the Wonder wells forth from the seer-heart of the mystic Āḻvār Poygai and the others. The verses are composed in the *antādi* metre, that is to say, the poetic device by which the last word or part of a word (*anta*) of the previous hymn is the first (*ādi*) of the next hymn. This device corresponds to the canon of continuous thought or flow that interpenetrates and fuses as it flows. In dhyāna it is called *dhruvānusmṛti tailadhāra* (continuous flow of oil)—where there is no break from one hymn to the next.

POYGAI ĀLVĀR

God's miraculous nature or Wonder-productive activity has been the starting point of all speculative philosophy and religion. It is this wonder or surprise of novelty that has challenged the intelligence of man to come to terms with it by understanding, by works and by devotion. The very first verse of Poygai Āḻvār reveals the Wonder nature of God's creative Being which is expressed by means of similes drawn from ordinary life.

> "Deeming the world as bowl, the full sea as ghee, the fierce-rayed Sun as the luminous wick, I have twined a garland of speech for the feet of Him who wields the red flaming discus so that there may be freedom from the ocean of misery."*

The world is compared to the lamp-bowl in which oil is poured and the wick is lighted. The earth has parts, is *sāvayava,* therefore it is considered to be an effect. Indeed all the entities herein mentioned are parts of one creation. The sea which is supported by the lamp bowl supports the flame of the wick. But the lighter of all these and the flame that reveals the structure of the universes point to a transcendent maker. Seas obey him and the Sun keeps his measures regularly. The proof so far given is for the efficient causality of God. Here earth, water and Sun stand for the original three elements mentioned by the Upaniṣads. All these are under the control of the Ruler who is the one to be known in order to cross over the misery of existence which is compared to the ocean. From the ocean is the oil gathered and it

* *Mudal Tiruvandādi* 1. cf. tran. J.S.M. Hooper: *Hymns of the Ālvārs* p. 12. note 1.

helps the light and it is this light that has to help the transcendence of the ocean itself. This transcendence is possible only through realising the Ruler of all process and He is revealed to man through the inward flame or the outer Sun or both. God is known in the heart-flame and in Nature. Creation itself is a divine act for the sake of revealing the transcendent nature of the Divine to the soul in a variety of ways so as to abolish ultimately all misery for the soul. The second verse exclaims:

> "When was the Ocean churned? When were the waters poured for accepting the world as gift? None of these have I known. That is the Ocean which thou hast sent to sleep after making it calm and quiet. This the earth which thou hast created, divided and having swallowed up brought forth again."

The first part of the verse reminds us of the myth of Ocean-churning that brought out of it the most wonderful divine principles such as the poison that Śiva drank, the celestial horse and elephant and jewels and Śrī and the Nectar of immortality. The second reminds us of the myth of Viśvajit sacrifice that Bali performed in which Viṣṇu himself, the Lord of Sacrifice, came to ask of Bali the gift of three feet of ground in the form of dwarf *(Vāmana)* and got it from him and immediately assumed the Cosmic Form and in three steps covered the entire universes above and below. This is again a wonderful deed of the Creator who asked for the gift of three feet which really belonged to Him as such. It reveals the *atimānusha* (superhuman) nature of God. God's glory is typified by these two activities of creativity and redemptive activity, of resumption of the Soul into Himself when the soul does its righteous duty of sacrifice according to code.

The rest of the verse reveals God's activities of withdrawal of creation and creation of it anew age after age. We cannot perceive these cosmic processes since the time span of each one of these is beyond the measurements of man. "Neither that Ocean of Milk that was sent to sleep to rest, nor this Earth that has been withdrawn and ejected out of Thee, know of that state of Thine when thou wert so absorbed. Both these were enveloped or pervaded by Thee at all times. Thus both these have Thee as their cause". This seems to be the conclusion that follows from this verse justifying the claim of the *Vedānta Sūtras* that the knowledge of God as the Jagatkāraṇa is to be got only through revelatory intuition (*Vedānta Sūtras:* I.i.3).

The Āḻvārs were overpowered by the concept of myth of the Trivikrama and the first Āḻvār continues the myth he had intimated in the second verse by revealing the expanding stature of the Dwarf that received the gift of three feet of earth. The Vāmana became the Trivikrama. Vāmana, the *Kaṭhopaniṣad* says, is the Godhead secret in the heart of man, and Viṣṇu as the Omnipervading Being outside is the Trivikrama. The identity between the minute and the vast, or the minutest and the vastest (*aṇoraṇīyān mahato mahīyān*) is the supreme identity that is shown to be the doctrine of Viśiṣṭādvaitic interpretation of the famous *vākya*, *"Aham brahmāsmi"* or *"So 'ham asmi"* or *"Tat tvam asi"*. This myth is very important for understanding the Real Existence of the Omnipervading deity. This myth is found in the Veda itself.*

* *Rg. V.* I. 22. "The Gods be gracious unto us even from the place whence Viṣṇu strode through the seven regions of the earth Through all this world strode Viṣṇu; thrice his foot he planted and the whole was gathered in his foot-step's dust.

Again in *Rg. V.* I. 154. 3-4 (Sri Aurobindo's tr.) "Let our

Another wonder in the dissolution of the Universe is sung in the following hymn:

> "It is said that thou didst eat the Earth, the mountains, the wave-beating Ocean, air and the Sky....Was thy mouth as big as the Universe?" (v.8).

Such being the marvellous nature of God no wonder that:

> "The gods (immortals) make efforts to reach the feet of the Lord who wears garland of *tulasi*. The great souls according to prescribed rules, Vedic chant and other practices having made themselves praiseworthy are the first beings. Those who fitted to follow the passionate and dark qualities discover the lords suited to them and praise their gods by painting them on the wall, and by installing idols, praying to them as 'Our Lord' and will be following them. But,

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strength and our thought go forward to Viṣṇu the all-pervading, the wide-moving Bull whose dwelling is on the Mountain, who being One has measured all this long and far-extending seat of our self-accomplishing by only three of his strides. He whose three steps are full of the honey-wine and they perish not but have ecstasy by the self-harmony of their nature; yea, he being One holds the triple principle and earth and heaven also, even all the worlds." (*On the Veda*. pp. 391-2).

Rg. V. 155 mentions, "A mortal man when he beholds the two steps of him who looks upon the light is restless with amaze"... But his third step doth no one venture to approach, no, nor the feathered birds of air who fly with wings". Cf. *Rg. V.* VII. 49.

Rg. V. VI. 49 mentions that "Viṣṇu thrice measured out the earthly regions" which as it were seems to refer to the triple possession of the earth also. May be it refers to the triple sacrifice *triṇāciketas tribhir etya sandhim trikarmakṛt tarati janmamṛtyuh* ...of the *Kaṭhopaniṣad*. Āḻvārs always considered this triple striding act an act of Redemption of man by taking man into His shelter again, even as the Rg. V. says, "When one so great as Thou affordest shelter may we with wealth and with ourselves be happy." (VI. 49). Śrī Rāmā is said to have almost repeated this same exploit of covering India by foot and thus took all the souls under his refuge. This is said to be a glorious act of God's kindness

> the Form of the Lord who hath measured the universe verily is the Primal Being." (v.13 & 14).

It will be seen from the above that it is shown that paintings and idols are usually resorted to by people of *rājasic* (passionate) and *tāmasic* (dark) qualities. The *sātvika* seeker on the other hand rejoices on the Form of God that is perceived by him in the heart or through supernatural intuition as in his own case. Thus the Āḻvār already shows that the real method of meditating on the Lord is to remember the measureless qualities of wonder revealed in the myths that liberate the soul-knowledge.

In the 73rd verse the Āḻvār shows that the support of the entire Universe, not only of our earth, is Viṣṇu. It is not enough that He is known to be the cause and that He is primal, full of *sattva*, of purest quality serene. who causes the dissolution and creation of the worlds, but that He is the supporter of all creation, that His is a continuous creative activity. To praise Him is our duty:

> "O Mind! Praise thou Him who is adorned with beautiful leaves of *Tulasi!* Or accuse or do evil or desire Him as thou pleasest. He is the supporter of the watery Ocean, the Mountain the wide Sky, Air, the body and the soul."

It is clear that one must remember God in every way, by praise or accusation or even offence against God almost suggesting the later views that both *vihita* (good) and *niṣiddha* (prohibited) *bhaktis* could lead to constant remembrance. Just as separation *(viraha)* can enhance remembrance, hatred can promote constant remembrance through fear or anger or love that is purely of the vita nature.

God is to be the only One object of man's constant thought and insatiable desire.

The relation between the soul and the Lord is then described. God's approachability *(saulabhya)* has already been stated to be seen in His Trivikrama nature. It speaks of His coming to man. But from the point of view of inner knowing, it is not so easy. His transcendence, however, does not prevent Him from coming to us his children, though our going to His Transcendent Mansions is surely difficult. By offering all our organs of sense and activity and the mind and ego and *buddhi* to God we can of course know Him.

> "The ear, tongue, eyes, nose and skin these five sense-organs; the red flame, earth, water, air and sky these five elements; the incessant consciousness, sacrifice, excellent dharma, are not these said to be the instruments of Varāha? (v.12).

The Varāha is said to be the third *avatār* of Viṣṇu of the form of Boar. It means the slayer of that which is considered to be excellent. The senses and the ego and other elements are to be brought under control; for, their lower direction is towards grossness. They could become instruments of God Himself once they are directed and dedicated to Him.

God is verily partial to his devotees and is solicitous of their *yoga-kṣema* (welfare). He is therefore called *āśritabhavya* (v.22), as is seen in his being at home with his foster mother Yaśoda. Thus it is seen that the individual soul is related to God through submission or dependence, as His instrument and as His creature. The body-soul relationship between the jīva and God is also spoken of in the 28th verse. Indeed they seem to be

in His Body as He is their soul supporting them and their bodies.

> "Faultless Veda-owning Brahmā was born of thy navel; the conqueror of Tripura is in some portion of thy body".

The inmost essence of the soul links it up with God in all ways. In the soul is born that devotion that is an answer to the love of God. The miraculous reciprocation by God by way of *avatārs* is indeed the substantial truth of religious experience. Thus the Āḻvār says:

> "Then in the womb was I lying. I turned in the direction of the Lord of Śrīrangam. I folded my hands (in submission). I know nothing. O wavering soul! How can I forget the Person whose lustre is that of the Ocean?" (v.6).

He beautifully compares the yearning of the soul for God with calf panting for its mother (v.30).

He says that he will not praise any one else except the Lord, since every instrument is to be dedicated to Him alone; for he is His, whole and entire (v. 11 and 63, 88). Almost paraphrasing the *Īśopaniṣad, mā gṛdaḥ kasyasvit dhanam,* "do not covet anyone's wealth" (1) the Āḻvār says, "I shall not hanker after another's wealth, I shall not steal the soul which is sought after by the Lord" (64), for as the Upaniṣad says everything belongs to Him alone: *Īśāvāsyam idam sarvam yatkiñca jagatyām jagat:* "all this is for the habitation of the lord, the moving and the unmoving". It is thus clear that the Āḻvār's words echo the great passages of the Upaniṣad. This shows that the religious consciousness arrives at the profound maxim of being that one is not one's own but that one belongs to the Lord, body and soul with all the organs and the mind.

Once the individual has arrived at the intuitive per-

tion of God as the Self of all reality, there is no r of *Samsāra*. The Upaniṣad asks, "For him who has n himself in God and God in himself where is there usion, where is fear (*Ka Mohaḥ kaśśokaḥ*)?" The ār hymns:

> "To our Lord who is difficult to meditate upon, Who is afar, Who has a thousand names, if one but folds his hands, he will not be oppressed by Karma, nor will he go to hell, nor will he tread the path of pain even a bit" (v.65).

It is by carrying on one's head the feet of God that e invokes the grace and mercy of God to oneself. In- d 'the wearing of the feet' is what the mark on the face the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas signifies. It is clear that the supreme owledge (*parajñāna*) is this much alone, the goal is d-dependence, the means is 'wearing the feet' of God ich leads to God accepting us for His grace. Not by ything else is He to be gained. Though the meditan of the Lord is said to be difficult because He is transident (v.65), yet to attain Him is easy and most simple ough 'wearing His feet' on one's head, thus becoming s instruments.

The Āḻvārs had immense belief in the icons. They viously seemed to have discerned the difference beeen paintings on the wall and idols and the icons ich are installed according to Vedic and *Āgama*-knowlge. It is the most accessible form of worship of that ich is Pure through Divine descent. That the iconic rship was by no means alien to the Vedic seers is ar from the researches of B.C. Bhattacharya (*Indian ages*, p. xvii ff.). The Form of God as revealed to e inner vision of the Seer is thought to be eminently table for worship. The transition to the installation the Icon-form of God as instructed by that intuitive

consciousness is a natural process, and the *Āgamas* specialised in this art. The Icon was not merely a symbol but a presence in the transcendent sense, and under certain conditions, and it may deteriorate into a kind of idolatry when the conditions of worship or installation are not fully implemented. This is the *raison d'etre* of the *Pāñcarātra* and *Vaikhānasa* and *Tantra* modes of worship. God's love or descent is not conditioned by any levels; for He indeed is the triple-striding One, covering all universes including the residence of the farthermost abode of Brahmā. The first three Āḻvārs mention four places as fit places for the worship of God in the Icon form.

At Tiruvengadam, at the Celestial City (Vinnagaram), at the shrine of Yathoktakāri of inexhaustible flowers, and at the tall temple of Tirukkoilur, God is present at these four places standing, sitting, lying down and walking*. If thus one should contemplate on Him, sorrows will perish (v.77).

The learned commentator adds that sins and sorrows that accrue to man in these four ways of acting (standing, sitting, lying down and walking) typified by the poses of God will be removed.**

Tiruvengadam is described as the place where Śrī Kṛṣṇa loved to dwell:

> "The mountain that surpasses in brilliance the mental radiance of the Eternals, which extin-

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* *Praṇava's* four states: As *Turya*, as *Prajñā* (lying down, *Suṣupti*), as *Taijasa* (as sitting dreaming) and as *Viśva* (as standing). AUM symbology of Mandukya Up.

** Pey Āḻvār also, as will be seen, speaks of the three forms of God much more vividly (*Mūnrām Tiruvandādi*, v. 94). Compare it with the *Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmana* I. 15.11.1. which speaks of the same, *Devā vai svargam lokam aipsantam na śayana na āsina na tiṣthanto na dhāvanto nai'va kañcana karmanā pnuvan.*

guishes the fire of sins accruing to those who seek more riches, renouncing God, and is dear to those lovers who always meditate on the ways of being inseparable from the beautiful *tulasi*-adorned Being, is Tiruvengadam" (v.26).

The obstacles to riches, obstacles to God-realization and the obstacles to self-realization are all annihilated by Tiruvengadam.* Tiruvengadam is mentioned in half a dozen verses as the Object worthy of meditation:

"O mind, meditate on the Lord, the Supreme Man, as thine own being that He protects us, that He resides in the minds of the meditators, that He is 'lying' on the Ocean (of Milk), that He is standing on the Veṅkaṭācala Hill, that He is dwelling in thy heart" (v.99).

The last is a meditation on the *unitas multiplex* nature of God intimated with vividness by the *Āgamas* in their *vyūha* theory. This is integral meditation or unified meditation that leads one to the goal of Real Existence and freedom in a simple way.

Thus Poygai Āḻvār particularly covers the gamut of religious consciousness by describing the Nature of God, the Nature of the soul and the means to reach that oneness that is natural to the soul and whose separation is the case of all suffering.

* This gives a new derivation for Vengadam. *Kadan* means *ṛna* or debt and *Ven* means one who helps discharging that triple debts. But here it means that he removes the obstacles to those who get riches or the sin of getting riches, the sin of renouncing God for the sake of their own freedom, and the sin of seeking exclusive inseparability from God even to the point of not carrying out His will.

PŪTATTĀR

The second Āḻvār, Pūtattār, was born, it is said, in Māmallapuram, modern Mahābalipuram, in the Chingleput District of Madras State. He is important in so far as he forged ahead of Poygai Āḻvār with the transcendent knowledge (*parajñāna*) towards the transcendent devotion to God *(parābhakti)*. The transcendent knowledge does not remain at the level of mere intellectual perception and understanding. It is not content to think of the Divine as the cause, as the Being of marvellous power, omniscience and transcendence. The reasoning, however attenuated by logical discussion when it thrusts forward to apprehend the things in-itself *(yāthātathyato arthān)*, cannot but culminate in the knowledge suffused with trust and belief and faith in its being the means to our ultimate salvation or freedom from all sorrow. Devotion in a sense *is* the knowledge that none else is the way and the means and the goal of our endeavour. It is this torch of devotion that the second Āḻvār lights and with it seeks the apprehension of the Divine Nature. In the first Āḻvār we are not aware of his saying 'I SAW THE DIVINE'. 'I *know* the Divine' is very different from and very much less than the statement "I *saw* the Divine Lord."* Even so, however, without the first, the intuitive non-sensory experience of the Divine is something impossible.

Almost the very first hymn of the *Irendām Tiru-*

* Cf. *Bhagavad Gītā*, XI. 54:

भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहं एवंविधोऽर्जुन! ।
ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परंतप! ॥

Knowing, seeing and entering into It with one's own entire being are the three processes that bear comparison with the three Āḻvārs: Poygai, Pūtattār and Pey respectively.

vandādi breathes the same form as that of the First Āḻvār:

> "Devotion as the lamp-bowl, aspiration as ghee, the mind that has melted out of delight as the wick, with melting soul have I lighted the bright flame of devotion to Nārāyaṇa in the revealed Tamil language in verse."

Three important factors are needed for the attainment of the Highest Devotion that is the support of aspiration which constantly renews the mind that has become the wick of the soul which is verily the flame rising upto the goal of Nārāyaṇa or rather which illumines the Ultimate Goal of all life who is known as Nārāyaṇa, the abode of all souls which have perceived that He is the all-indweller and all-support *(sarvādhāra)*. A devotion that illumines is real devotion, and it is its highest aspect. The so-called blind devotion is no devotion at all, but a passionate attachment that more often than not misleads the seeker. This kind of devotion is certainly not what the highest sages have sought for as the support of the aspiration of their soul.

God is He who melts the soul and the mind as well; indeed it is a reciprocal process by which aspiration flows through the mind and heats it and the soul too, being supported by the ghee of aspiration, melts and in turn melts the aspiration by heating the ghee that tends to get solidified. The Vedic sacrificial symbol seems also to be deftly intimated. Ghee or clarified butter is what one offers into the sacrificial fire of the fire altar so that the flames may rise and Agni may take our offerings to the Highest Being. Agni is the lowest placed and Viṣṇu is the Highest and all the gods are also being propitiated by the offering through Agni who is the Divine Aspiration, or as Sri Aurobindo puts it, Divine Will.

All souls are equal in the eyes of God, the Supreme, and all have the divine destiny to become the eternal seers, including gods, or celestials and terrestrials.

> "There is no difference between them (gods) and the souls. Who is there that does not praise the feet of the Lord resting on the serpent? Has not the lotus-born (Brahmā) Who has the radiance of the Sun, Whose rays are spread out closely (densely) everywhere and has not the fore-eyed Śiva the habit of daily going to Him seeking refuge?

Pūtattār enumerates the exploits of Vāmana-Trivikrama (v.5), the incident of Pūtana (v.9, 28, 49), the Varāha-avatār (v. 31), the incident of the wood-apple (v.19, 23)*, the Śakaṭāsura episode (v.10, 19)** and Narasimhāvatār (v. 18, 47). Thus we find him to be conversant with the *avatārs* of Viṣṇu. The episodes that belong to Srī Kṛṣṇa are shown to be already very well known and this is certainly an important fact. Indeed the episode of Śrī Kṛṣṇa getting down from the chariot in the Kurukṣetra battle-field to slay Bhīṣma in contravention of his own vow not to take a weapon is also mentioned (v.7) so as to show the utmost love of God to his devotees though in this case Bhīṣma himself had taken arms against God's chosen side.

There is a mention of the Āḻvār's own dream about Nārāyaṇa which is very important:

> "I saw the form of Kṛṣṇa in my dream; then I saw the flaming discus in His hand, which abolishes good and evil alike.*** I enjoy

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* *Bhāgavata*, X.6.

** *ibid*, X. 7.

*** The getting rid of both good and evil alike means the transcendence of both that bring about results that are enjoyable and miserable. Good acts promote the fruits of enjoyable

the strength of the Lord who gets rid of the tendencies which cause sorrow that returns again and again." (v.18).

And lest it be considered to be a mere dream, a fantasy or work of his personal imagination, he says:

"By *day-time* I saw Him: I saw the all-pervading Lord; even more clearly than in dream did I see Him." (v.81).

The Vision of the Divine which is described above is a gift of God to those who have rightly discerned or intuited the highest Being and through devotion have sought Him. The utter abandonment of all that militate against devotion and aspiration have to be eschewed. This is what the Āḻvār himself says:

"Those who have renounced doing evil consciously and unconsciously and are enjoying Thee according to the Way, and those who incessantly repeat the names of Nārāyaṇa knowing well the reason for praising Him, will thus enjoy Him with us" (v.20).

Perfect purification is got by the renunciation of desire for all things except Him, and by constant remembrance of Him. This is *ekānta-bhakti*, or *ananyabhakti*, one-pointed love and adoration. *Bhakti* of this *śuddha*, *pure* variety alone has the power to make one achieve the Highest who will cut asunder, for ever all that binds man to the interminable ever recurrent cycle of misery and life and death.

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things, *artha* and *kāma*, whilst evil acts produce loss of these or deprivation. The aim is to go beyond the production of results of both kinds. Thus the liberated soul shakes off both these and proceeds to its Ultimate Good namely God Nārāyaṇa. This is intimated in the Upaniṣads, and from Him one does not return to these terrestrial worlds for enjoyment of the pleasant and the unpleasant.

through constant aspiration for Him and through uninterrupted remembrance.

Naturally, there is the further phase to which Pūtattār has prepared, namely, the god-intoxication of the third Āḻvār.

PEYĀLVĀR

Peyāḻvār is said to have been born in Mailāpore (Mylapore), modern Madras, of a red-lotus *(raktotpala)*. As the name signifies, he was mad, that is, God-mad or God-intoxicated. The greatness of Peyāḻvār lay in his knowledge-vision of the Divine from a deeper perception of God's eternal di-unity as Divine Two, comprising Nārāyaṇa and His consort Śrī *(Tiru)*. This perception, which is subtle and deep and profoundly revealing the Divine's Integral Nature, goes beyond the intuition of Poygai and the dream of Pūtattār in so far as it shows the redemptive Grace of God to one who has verily entered into Him. The impersonal or logical highest of the first Āḻvār melts imperceptibly into the Personal Highest of Pūtattār and grows into the experience of Grace inseparably united with the Person who is the primal Cause of all, the support and sustenance of all the worlds.

In one sense we can say that Pey saw God as with His infinite Śakti as the *tantras* have stated. For not only should we know the cause but also explain how that cause affects the universes. In Ṛg Vedic *khila, Śrī Sūkti* has invoked the supreme Divine Jātaveda to bring *Śrī Lakṣmī anapagāminī,* the compassionate Ārdrā, who resides in the lotus pond (*puṣkariṇī*), who is prosperity (*puṣṭī*), who is of beautiful hue, who is decked with golden garlands, who is the impeller (*sūrya*) and wealth (*mantra* 14). The Āḻvār's first verse in the *Mūnrām* or Third *Tiruvandādi* expresses the same Vision. The Mother has been brought into the vision of God, and this experience has become cardinal to the entire theology of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism, which emphasises that Śrī is the principle of redemptive grace which operates on and

through every function of the Divine Lord-Cause. Nothing in this world is Graceless, all evil; for, at the bottom of all is the operation of purest Grace, a grace-power that is omnipotent, leading the soul to its transcendent destiny, acting as the Teacher and Mother and all.

The Āḻvār exclaims:

"The Mother have I beheld in the Ocean-hued!
The Form of golden splendour have I seen.
The radiant sun-like Form have I perceived.
The beautiful discus that glows fiery in battle
And the lovely conch in beauteous hands have
I seen."

The divine love of God is such that one enters into the very being of God, losing oneself in the rapture of God's inner nature. A new perception of the Reality happens, which is altogether different from what one perceives from the point of view of the world or the individual. The divinely possessed one perceives the world and all with the over-welling love that God has for his creation. It is no longer with human love that one loves God; but with God-love that one perceives the world and all. This is *parama-bhakti,* not merely transcendent, but superior verily to that also.*

At the heart of creation there is a transcendent transcending Love, that is supreme power also. Thus the *tantra* developed this power-aspect or śakti; but it has been shown that this power is not so much the power of knowledge, or the power of creative novelty or ever-new crea-

* If the final deity is but the impersonal principle emerging from a space-time confluence then the doom of the world is final word. In the words of Bertrand Russell in his essays on free man's worship (Mysticism and Logic p. 47), "the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins."

tivity, but the power of love itself. Thus the Śrī or Lakṣmī is in the heart of the Divine and the concept of Śrīnivāsa,* the name by which Śrī Vaiṣṇavas call the Divine specially, is derived from the Vision, from the standpoint of the Eternal *sub specie eternitatis*, so to speak, of Pey Āḻvār.

That the Divine had made him enter into Him is clear but that there is the other wonder that He entered into him in the yogic experience to which he adverts in almost the last verse (v-94):

> "Thinking, keeping the lamp of knowledge, searching for the Lord have I possessed Him now. The wonderful Lord of all, having entered into me inseparably (never to separate again) has *stood, sat* and *lain Himself* down in me."

That this vision or experience of God within oneself is to be a realisation through *para-jñāna* is clear; for, one must search and aspire for God alone, one finds in oneself not outside oneself. When the Divine enters, one finds Him possessing him in all states so as to appear that 'on no condition or state is the Divine' parted from

* Śrī Rāmānuja with the vision of Pey Āḻvār describes the supreme Brahman as Śrīnivāsa—*Brahmaṇi Śrīnivāse* in the opening verse of the *Śrī Bhāṣya* commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras*.

The relationship between Śrī and Viṣṇu—Nārāyaṇa or Brahman is shown from the Vedic and Purāṇic sources to be one of Pati and Patni: *Hrīśca te Lakṣmīśca Patnyau* (*Śrī Sūkta* 14); *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* I.8.19, *Puruśa Sūkta* 9, *Brahma Purāṇa*: *Tac caktir durjaya bhima Viṣṇu śaktir iti smṛtā*.

All icons of Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa as in Tiruvengadam have the Śrī or Lakṣmi on the chest or heart region. It is this double characteristic iconically represented that reveals the inner psychological perception. The outer icon Śrī as separate from Viṣṇu shows that the play of an outer consciousness delights in it, is a mistaken view. Never can the Śrī be out of the heart of Reality, the all-containing all-supporting Viṣṇu, the Omnipervader.

the Āḻvār. This is what the first Āḻvār discerned in the temples of God wherein He was represented as standing (waking), sitting (dream or *dhyāna)*, and lying down (asleep or resting), but Pey Āḻvār discerns the inward movement of God within himself.

Non-purposive or logistic thinking for thinking's sake is incapable of arriving at this Vision through intuition. The purpose of knowledge is not omniscience, though it is held that one must seek in a supramental way, the all-knowledge-way of the supermind. It is not an end in itself but a means to the end which transcends knowledge and arrives at Being or Reality.

The vision of God in this new way of the entry of God into oneself is capable of destroying the sins of all kinds:

> "By seeing God have I destroyed my increasing sins." (v. 2)
>
> "God is the medicine to our hell-existence." (v. 3)

These are experiences of the falling off of sin and shedding of disease that the Āḻvār records. "God is verily Medicine, Wealth and Immortality" says he (v. 4). This idea Kulaśekhara develops in his *Mukundamālā* verses where he says that God is as *Gāruda Mani,* as *mantra* and as Auṣadha (v. 22, 23 & 24). The most important thing to do is to cultivate constant remembrance of God by recounting his names and indeed, being connotative, they refer to the deeds of God in relation to the Universe. There is recounted the fruits that arise from such a practice. They are of course righteous wealth, or wealth that does not bind but helps God-attachment and remembrance, splendour, vitality, beauty and birth in a faultless family if indeed a birth is necessary for the glory of God and as service to God.

"If thou recitest the names of God who has the white conch with *dakṣināvarta*, then good things such as splendour, vitality, wealth, beauty and birth in a *faultless* family and others will all happen to thee" (v. 10).

The Supreme Being is thus the treasure-house of auspicious perfections and graces and goods.

The ancient view that Venkaṭam (Vengadam) is a place of Release (*vīdu*) is enunciated by this Āḻvār (v. 14). The worship of Śrīnivāsa or Lord of Vengadam facilitates the renunciation of lower pleasures such as woman's hair, and clasp of their hands, for verily these are asked to be renounced on the Hill at Tiruvengadam. One's whole being gets absorbed in the wonderful beautiful form of God that is All Mercy and Grace without a trace of any other.

This *Tiruvandādi* also recounts the exploits of Trivikrama, destruction of Danta-vakra, Pūtana, Hiraṇyakaśipu, and also Gajendra Mokṣa. The Trivikrama exploit of God is, however, as already remarked, most frequently referred to (v. 4, 5, 9, 18, 47).

The whole world is described as the body of God. This naturally follows from the description of God making the soul his dwelling place, in which he stands, sits and lays Himself down.

"All things are His body. Brahmā and others (gods), stars and those who have *tapas* (austerity) as their body, are Himself. The blazing fire, the huge mountains, the two heavenly lights (sun and moon) are He. The Lord who is all these is Incomparable (*tane uvaman;* He Himself is His object of comparison). (v. 38).

The places of Residence of the Lord in the Universe are stated by this Āḻvār thus:

> "The Lord resides in the Milk Ocean as (*vyūha*); in Venkatāchala (as *Arcā*), in the primeval serpent (Ananta), Cool Heaven (Vaikuṇtha), and the Ocean of Scriptures (*Veda*) which contains occult truths, and in the minds (hearts) of Yogis (*Hārda*) who have made their minds rest in their hearts (v. 32)."

"To such a God who has completely occupied me both within and without me, have I become a slave" declares the saint (v. 37). This echoes the great Upaniṣadic truth that the Divine is established in all having pervaded both inside and outside (*antarbahiśca tatsarvam vyāpya Nārāyaṇa sthitaḥ*).

The divine experience (*divyānubhava*) of the Āḻvār Pey also is unique in so far as he finds that everything about God is beautiful and tender even like the lotus (v. 9). This is *rasa-anubhava* that goes beyond the intuitive reason and transcendent devotion. The experience is not one to be doubted; for it is truly available to one who lets himself go in God, offering no resistance to His entry into him and filling him.

> "Questioning not whether it is good or bad, Seek thou the beautiful feet of the Lord on whose chest is worn the fragrant honey-laden *tulasi*. All thy sins will immediately vanish" (v. 88).

Thus Peyāḻvār presents the three gems of spiritual experience of God, as possessing Śrī in His Divine heart, as the most beautiful and satisfying Being and as the most tender and as the Healer of all sorrow and abolisher of sin and fear of death.

This God-intoxicated saint of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism is verily one who could transport everybody into the raptures of the Infinite.

Thus the first three Āḻvārs gave the stamp of the whole stream of Śrī Vaiṣṇava renaissance and gave the cream of the Vedic knowledge and religion. Veda regaining its original force through the living and dynamic experience of the Divine became the transformative force of the next millenium in the South. They have entwined the Vedic knowledge with Experience that transcends all other ways of knowing; they enriched or discovered another vital medium in Tamil for conveying the glorious purified knowledge-devotion and aesthetic enjoyment of God; they have shown that the highest spiritual experience is not the monopoly of any group, but is the heritage of those who have abandoned everything for the sake of living and moving and having their being in the Ultimate (*Para*) who exhibits Himself in the forms of *avatārs* and *arcās* and *antaryāmins*.

CHAPTER II

BHAKHISĀRA
(The Āḻvār of Tirumaliśai)

Bhaktisāra or the Essence of Bhakti is the fourth Āḻvār. He is said to have been born of a sage Bhārgava and Kanakāngi, an apsarasa-woman, in a forest near Mahisārapuri. Having been left in the forest by his parents as soon as he was born, he was picked up by a childless cowherd and taken home and brought up in his family. He exhibited from his very birthday freedom from desire for food. His foster-father went and consulted a Śūdra sage nearby who, divining that the child was a great soul, prayed to it and offered milk. The child then drank some milk and asked his foster-mother to drink the remainder, saying that she would beget a child soon. A child was born to her in due course and was named Kanikanna, who remained with Bhaktisāra during his lifetime.

For seven years Bhaktisāra did not partake of any food. At the end of that period he left his home on pilgrimage to holy shrines strewn all over the country. He practised Yoga. In his wanderings he came across all types of religious and philosophical schools such as Buddhism (Śākya), Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāmkhya, Pātanjala and Kāpāla. After a considerable number of years he became Siddha, an adorer of God Śiva. He was considered to be a brilliant expounder of Śaiva philosophy. Finally he gave up speech and adopted the vow of silence (*maunavrata*).

The third Āḻvār Pey, coming to know of Bhaktisāra as a profound soul and yogi, went to him with a view to correct him and lead him to the real experience of the Ultimate Being. He found Bhaktisāra observing silence and unwilling to be drawn into any sort of discussion.

He therefore hit upon a plan. He set up a small garden plot just within sight of Bhaktisāra. In it he planted seedlings but with their roots in the air and leaves under the earth! He then proceeded to water these seedlings in their inverted* condition with the help of a pot which had so many holes that it could not retain any water. He went on doing this. Looking at this absurd act Bhaktisāra could not restrain his laughter and exclaimed, "What a mad fellow?" Pey Āḻvār immediately caught this opportunity to draw Bhaktisāra, vowed to silence, into an argument and retorted: "Who is mad? Not I but you, for you worship one who is the grandson of the Original Person as the Cause of the whole world."

After a series of arguments, it is stated, Bhaktisāra accepted Nārāyaṇa as the Supreme Being, who is the Original Cause of all the worlds. So it is said that the first composition of this Āḻvār is called *Nānmukan Tiruvandadi*, which seeks to establish the truth of the Primal causality of all the worlds to be Nārāyaṇa.

Bhaktisāra became one of the foremost exponents of Śrī Vaiṣṇava theosophy. In him we find for the first time the mention of the *Vyūha*-theory of *Pāncarātra āgama*.

Bhaktisāra claims that he knows the Ultimate more thoroughly than anybody. He continued to be a yogi and his vision of Nārāyaṇa was a completion of the *parajnāna* (transcendental knowledge), *parabhakti* (transcendental devotion), and *parama-bhakti* (supreme devotion) of the first three Āḻvārs. We find him to be an integral seer and that seems to be the reason why he was known as *bhaktisāra*—in whom knowledge has transformed itself into devotion, and culminated in divine Vision.

* This seems to have a reference to Bhagavad Gita, XV. 1.
ऊर्ध्वमूलम् अधःशाखम् अश्वत्थं प्राहुर् अव्ययम् ।

There are several stories about him, but most of them are incredible. But we can mention one of them which refers to his extraordinary powers. Once a magician by name Sūktisāra was travelling in the sky on a tiger. Bhaktisāra stopped him by his occult powers and made him come down. The magician came down, and knowing that Bhaktisāra made him come down, approached Bhaktisāra offering him a present of a magic cloak. But the Āḻvār refusing that cloak offered him instead a coat of precious stones. Seeing this, the magician asked Bhaktisāra to convert his *japa-māla* or rosary into a garland of precious stones and Bhaktisāra through his occult powers converted it much to the amazement of that magician who praised the sage and saluting him took leave.

There are other stories of his alchemical powers. But most interesting of all is the making of an old woman young and beautiful. This incident took place when the Āḻvār was staying at Kāñci Yathoktakāri temple—the name given to the God in that temple after this curious incident. The restoration of youth to the girl made her attractive to the local king. He was infatuated by her beauty and married her. Her beauty was waxing everyday whereas his own was waning day by day. He queried her about this phenomenon. She told him that it was all due to the blessings of the Āḻvār who was staying at the Yathoktakāri temple nearby whom she was worshipping every day. The king sent word to the disciple of the Āḻvār, Kanikannan, and wanted him to bring the Āḻvār to his presence. The disciple told him that the rule was that the king should go to the Āḻvār with due reverence and meet him. The king was enraged at this reply, which belittled his own importance. He then wanted the disciple to sing a song in praise of his own glory. This too was refused by Kanikannan, because, he said,

mortal lips were made to praise one's teacher and God and not any one else. Incensed at this, the king ordered him to leave the city. The disciple went to his master and told him of all that had transpired and started to leave the city. The Āḻvār followed him praying to the reclining God in the temple to roll up His mat and follow him. So the disciple was followed by his master and both of them were followed by the God in the temple. Seeing this strange phenomenon, all the townsfolk began to walk out of the city, performing a wholesale evacuation. The king got alarmed at this and ran to the Āḻvār and requested him to forgive the offence and return to the city. The Āḻvār graciously agreed to his prayer.

In his final days the Āḻvār stayed at Kumbhakonam. He shed his body at Kumbhakonam at a ripe old age.

NĀNMUKHAN TIRUVANDĀDI

Tirumaḻisai Āḻvār has left us only two compositions, the *Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi* and the *Tiruccchanda Viruttam.* The first is written in the same metre as the *tiruvandādis* of the first three Āḻvārs, and may be considered to be continuing the spirit of the first three Āḻvārs. Obviously it is the earlier work. It declares the supreme or Ultimate causality of Nārāyaṇa, whilst the first three *andādis* are utterances of the vision of the Lord through transcendent or supramental knowledge, supramental devotion and supramental knowledge-devotion. The unique experience of the primal causality of God Nārāyaṇa is stated by the Āḻvār to have been vouchsafed to him perhaps in the Vision of the Lord at Śrīrangam, in the Milk Ocean and the Child on the Vaṭapatra (fig leaf) (NT. 1 & 3). This reveals that the Āḻvār's vision transcended all space and time and included a simultaneity of vision of the identical One Being in all the places and

in all forms. The *Tirucchanda Viruttam* is more metaphysical and enumerates the categories of experience in such a way as to point out that all are of the One, dependent on that One and owe their existence and essence to that One alone. The central mystical principle enunciated by both works is that the Ultimate cause alone can be the Path, the Goal and the Means for liberation or bliss or for work or weal.

Taking the *Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi* first, which is the earlier of the two works, we are presented with the nature of God:

> "Nārāyaṇa begot the four-faced (Brahmā); the four-faced one being the first (creature) himself begot Śankara. Being myself the First (seer) I have made known this inner meaning (to all). Do thou know this (without losing any part without any remainder)" (1).

God also is the supreme Being. There is no Second or equal like Him. He transcends the entire universe that comprises several worlds. This is the real meaning of Reality, that the Real is that which lives by Him, who controls all that He had created, and sustains. To be real then means to be created and sustained and controlled by Him and to be enjoyed by Him alone.

> "If investigated (all seers) will declare the Lord to be One only. His greatness none knows. This alone is the conclusive meaning of reality."

The unity of Nature, the purposiveness of order in the world and other such features point to the Oneness of the Governing power.

The Lord is also the ordainer of all the fruits of Tapas or Yoga. He is *karmādhyakṣa*, the granter of results of all actions. This is the special characteristic

of the deity,* though the law of *karma* that every action has its results is by no means abrogated by this statement. Every cause is followed by an effect. This provides the mechanical link. It is this that is usually affirmed as the complete statement of the cause-effect relationship. But when the activities are by individuals who are seeking certain ends, it is seen that these individuals have the 'awareness' of the cause-effect relationship and of the results accruing from any action. This 'awareness' itself cannot however yield the notion that there is a being or person who has determined the appropriate fruits of the actions, or is the ordainer of fruits. It is this Person that the *mīmāmsakas* affirm is not necessary, since there is no need to posit the existence of God over and above the causes and effects even in respect of supernatural fruits. They assert in other words that the ritual causal relationship is not of a different order from the mechanical, even though there is time-gap that transcends life itself, and absence of qualitative identity between the cause and fruit. This atheistic mīmāmsā view is refuted by the Āḻvār here when he says that the Lord is the ordainer of all fruits.

> "Fruits or effects of all actions of Tapas of those who perform them come finally from the Lord whose hand holds the discus" (2).

The Āḻvār declares the Lord to be the One or the only highest person, who is incomparably great, whose greatness cannot be known by anyone except by devotees like himself (*bhaktas*).

> "Who knows *as I do,* that the supreme causal substance of the universe, the true substance enjoyable by all eternals, is the incomparable

* cf. *Īsāvāsyopanisad-bhāsya* of Venkaṭanātha, ed. & tr. Dr. K. C. Varadachari and D.T. Tatachari, *SVOI* series, 2nd ed.

Person in the waters. lying in the Ocean of Milk, and at Śrīrangam and Who slept on the leaf" (3).

This verse intimates the enjoyable nature of God. God is knowable, enjoyable and is also the Primal Being established in the waters, of whom the great Manu has spoken (*Manu* D.S. I.8). It is there shewn that *nara* means *āpaḥ* or waters and its being His abode makes Him known as Nārāyaṇa. It is of course interpreted in a different way. The individual souls which have realised that God is the indwelling Spirit in all creatures and things are called *nara* (*Isa.* 2). He who has his abode in all creatures is Nārāyaṇa accordingly. It may again mean the primal waters in which the Divine resides. The primal form is assumed in order to reveal the unity of the material and efficient causality of God. Says the Āḻvār, "God is all" (NT. 20). "Thou art verily all this world. Verily their existence is due to thy grace. Thou art indeed the God of these gods of austerity." "Thou art indeed the flaming fire, the big mountains, the eight quarters, the two lights (Sun and Moon) in the egg." God is unexampled and unequalled in greatness. It is His will that brings all beings into existence (37).

Tirumāl akaippu is an echo of the Upaniṣadic *iccha* (desire) or volition which is not merely a will to be many but also a will to save, to redeem and to make souls reach the shore of immortality. It is not Nature (*svabhāva*) that makes the things manifest themselves (*Śve. Up. VI. 1*). It is not in the power of *svabhāva* to move backwards into its own source or unmanifest state nor has it self-power to grow. A clock-movement of winding and unwinding (*abhivyakta*) is not capable of going beyond its starting point or beyond mere repetition. An independent transcendent Being is necessary to bring all

into existence as well as to withdraw them into itself. It is this that is implied in the Rulership character of God as well as His creatorship. The logic of the intellect cannot prove such a God. It is revelation or Vision alone that can testify to it. The Āḻvār in the *sub specie eternitatis* vision had perceived the quarternary existence of that Ultimate Person who is in all as their self and indwelling presence.

In the fourth verse the Āḻvār says that God Nārāyaṇa is the *sarva-vācaka-śabda.* Every word ultimately connotes Him only. He is thus not only the total cause but also is the object denoted by all words. Obviously 'words' here refer to nouns and such as are capable of being subjects of propositions. God being the Ultimate Subject of all predicates as the inner core or substance of all objects and as Self of all, He is referred to either through the objects or even directly when thought of in a connotative way.

God is stated to be creator of all gods, men, animals and plants (v. 5). Whilst speaking of God as creator the Āḻvār also mentions His great act of destruction of Hiraṇyakaśipu. This act of destruction means however the saving of all those who have been oppressed by that great super-egoist. Thus in outline the first verses describe the nature of the transcendent Godhead—the *Paratattva.*

The Āḻvār then mentions that men are usually misled about God's real nature, being or existence, attributes, powers and manifestations. Whilst the supreme Deity Nārāyana owes His nature and others to Himself as being intrinsic to Him, the others including the great God souls (devas) have their godhead granted to them. Their godhood is a form granted to them by the Supreme. They are extrinsic to them, granted to them for their austerity and devotion to Him (v. 53).

This god-status or godhood can be achieved even like the Ṛbhus and may be permanently retained too by the great souls, even like the immortality attained by Brahman-knowledge from which there is no return to ignorance and mortality. Gods are a class of creatures much higher than men and yet they too are but dependent on the Divine Highest. Only the Ultimate Deity is the protector of all (v. 30) and even gods seek shelter and refuge in Him.

God is the supreme protector and he destroys the evil and restores the good—recalling the glorious utterance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* (v. 48). Not only this, God runs after His devotees (v. 60). He is the sole means to the highest realisation (v. 64), for it is due to Him and His creatorship and transcendence that we exist at all. Through His grace, not by our works or intellect or by our charity, do we attain Him. Tirumaḻiśai Āḻvār exclaims, "I have no other God except Rāma, the destroyer of Lanka of the Asuras. Do not deem as fit to be attained, other gods, who being cruel have not the Godly nature. though they have attained God-state" (v. 53). God is thus not only He who has god-state but also possesses godly nature of love. God alone is the treasurehouse of man (v. 61). The path of Surrender to Him alone, through wearing His feet on one's head, is the path of liberation. That this is held to be the wearing of caste-mark of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism alone is not adequate because Surrender involves the further important steps of seeking refuge in Him, of having faith in His ability to save one, in discarding the obstacles to His realisation, and in accepting all such duties that help God-realisation.

Having described the nature of God and the duty of man towards Him, as a creature has to its creator, as a part to the whole, it may be asked as to what are

the results of not doing one's duty (dharma) by God. Not to do it entails all risks of misery of birth and death, and sorrow. Tapas (askesis) is of use in this direction, for obviously it is a method of great privation and suffering undertaken to get over misery. What is requisite is the knowledge of one's creatureliness and of all being including in this category, all the host of Heaven and nether worlds. The Āḻvār clearly points out that Tapas can only grant godhood but not godly nature or liberation (v. 6 and 53). Liberation can be obtained only by that saving knowledge that leads to God who rescues man from his karmic embodied existence (v. 79). For in this verse (79) the Āḻvār says that embodied existence is a disease (cf. TCV. 83), this despite the fact that the Āḻvār lived a very long time on this planet. He did not envisage an earth-immortality but only an immaterial immortal existence in divine Substance, or God.

The Āḻvār feels the importance of the concept of God's nearness (sāmīpya) to man in his struggle to surrender to the Divine. God's descent into humanity (*avataraṇa*) for the sake of helping humanity and all creatures is a positive fact of capital importance to Religious consciousness.

> "Thou hast manifested thyself as Milk-white, golden (yellow) green and black (in the four *yugas, (Kṛta, Treta, Dvāpara, Kali* respectively). Thou hast willed the destruction of both the Kuru and the Pāndava armies being the Commander (of the World)" (*NT.* 24).

The Āḻvār mentions the various descents of Nārāyaṇa as Rāma, Varāha, Vāmana, Trivikrama, Kṛṣṇa, Narasimha and Matsya.* These descents are called *vibhava-*

* Table of references in the *Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi* and *Tirucchanda Viruttam* of the Avatārs:

avatāras or descents for revealing God's supreme characteristic of *dharma-samsthāpanācārya*—establisher of dharma or righteous Order in the world again and again. They are to be distinguished from other descents such as descent into the soul of the devotee and as indwelling power in the *Arca* or icon or as the descent to perform the cosmic functions of creation, sustention and destruction. The Āḻvār reveals God's nearness of the historical order through the descents as *avatāras* for saving the world from demoniac forces that periodically usurp God's world.

The philosophy of descent of God is inescapable in any theology of redemption. It is in one form or another available in all religions which attempt to explain God's nearness to man. God's peculiar attributes of *āśrita-vātsalya* (tenderness to those who seek refuge, however sinful they might be), *saulabhya* (easy accessibility) and *sauśīlya* (excellent virtuous nature) are the prominent features of Providence. A remote Godhead is not cap-

Rama: *NT.* 8, 53, 85: *TCV.* 32, 33, 39, 91, 94, 116.
Varaha: *NT.* 70 *TCV.* 25, 26. 32, 48.
Vāmana: *NT.* 70 *TCV.* 25, 26, 32, 105, 109.
Trivikrama: *NT.* 9, 15 *TCV.* 105, 109.
Kṛṣṇa: *NT.* 16, 24; *TCV.* 25, 30, 31, 35, 36, 40, 41, 42, 43; 49; 71; 90.
Narasimha: *NT.* 5 18 *TCV.* 23, 24, 25, 63.
Matsya: *NT.* 22. *TCV.* 35.

We obviously do not have reference to Kūrma, and Paraśurāma in the list of ten avatāras. Of course there is no reference to Buddha or Kalki in the Āḻvār literature. The obvious inference then is that these two had not been entered into the list and that the list came into existence long afterwards. Paraśurāma had been always known as a part avatār or temporary possession of the Avatār function. The reasons seem to be that Sri Rāmā had inflicted a crushing defeat to the personality of Paraśurāma. The existence of these two avatārs simultaneously is a serious flaw. Indeed Paraśurāma is a *chiranjīvi* like Mārkaṇḍeya and is found to play a very influential role in the lives of the *Mahābhārata* heroes, Bhīṣhma, Droṇa, Karṇa. cf. *Harivaṁśa.* He was helping with his counsel the Divine Brothers' Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma.

able of being sought. The call of the devotee makes God run up to him like a mother that runs to its calf. "By this means Thou hast sought to relieve (the sorrows and fears of) the refugees," proclaims the Āḻvār (v. 25). The concept of *avatāra* apparently reveals an inner contradiction to the logical intellect. According to some thinkers it is said to be inconsistent with the nature of God as omniscient and omnipotent. There is no need for God to descend when He could as well save without descending. The evil could be destroyed by a fiat and indeed evil need not have been created as an occasion for God's descent. It is possible to conceive of a devotion without goodness (as instances of such are available in Purāṇic literature), in which case it is necessary to justify the destruction even of the devoted as against the good or those devoted to the good. Again what is the criterion of the good? Is it that which means obedience to the laws of the society at any particular time or of some theology, or to a messenger from above, or is it any obedience to the inner voice or revealed inner law, personal to the striving soul? Again if the *avatāra* is to be conceived to be a *finite* God, something in the manner of Ahura Mazda, has He to live an historical life of suffering, persecution and martyrdom, or has He merely to veil his transcendence of His own will by the form He assumes for the moment? Is His tenement a result of past *karma* or is it not at all subject to the laws of *karma*, yielding to the transcendent plastic stress of His own superior status? Indeed does the body of God interfere with His transcendence, omniscience and omnipotence and His oneness and omnipervasiveness? These questions have vexed and taxed the ingenuity of theo-

logians. The Āḻvārs have contributed vital solutions or answers to these questions.*

The Descent, if it were to be fruitful, must be a *total* presence involving no diminution of the greatness or glory, omniscience, omnipotence and omnipervasiveness of the descending Godhead. The differentia between the *avatāra* or descent and the gods lies precisely in the peculiar delimitation that the latter suffer in respect of their functional stations and duties which limits their omnipotence. Not so in the case of the descent. His form, whether it be that of the lowest animals or the human or divine (*deva*), whether He incarnates through a womb or not, is of divine Substance and not of mere matter, however purified (*śuddha-sattva*). His descent is out of grace and not out of any compulsion of events or forces extraneous to Himself. That not a bit of His transcendent power or puissance is lost in the act of descent the Āḻvār reveals by saying:

> "Thou who destroyest Hiraṇyakaśipu *in a day*, art also the Being who created gods, men, animals and plants" (v. 5).

Indeed it is in descent that His glory *(vibhava)* in its fullness and plenitude is revealed. God thus reveals His complete mastery over all forms of matter and life and mind.

We may suspend for the present a consideration of the metaphysical implications of the *avatāra* as this concept is accepted by the Āḻvār apparently from the Pāñcarātra literature which is clearly referred to by him in the *Tirucchanda Viruttam* (v. 17). The Āḻvār is equally concerned with the Arcā, iconic descent, in forms either consecrated by Himself or by sages or gods or men.

* cf. *Idea of God:* K. C. Varadachari for a fuller exposition (S.V.O. Institute, Tirupati).

There is mention of Śrīrangam (v.30, 36 and 60), Mylāpore (35), Tiruvallikeni (35), Tiruvengadam (34, 39-48). Kumbhakonam (36),* Yathoktakāri, Tiruvellore, Tirupperūr (36) and Kilāmbi (36). This may not mean that other temples were not existent about this time (4th century). There are however more temples accepted by this Āḻvār than the first Āḻvārs.

The largest group of hymns refer in the *Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi* to Tiruvengadam. The Āḻvār is almost lovesick with the Lord of Venkata.

> "I call upon the Lord of Venkata to appear to me. I shall draw a mystic circle on sand** for prophesying whether I shall reach the mountain in whose serpentine caverns stumble the elephants frightened at the falls which hurtle down sparkling stones" (v.39).

This is the first utterance of any Āḻvār of the beloved-lover relationship between the soul and God. It is this that had been developed at great length and with perfect artifice by Śaṭhakopa, Kulaśekhara and Āndāl.

> "The nature of the Lord of Vengadam is to grant salvation. I have always sung about Venkatācala when singing about a mountain. Thus have I secured salvation. Steadily established I am meditating; and lo! I have been caught in the net called the feet of the Lord of Śrī, who in turn is caught in the net called Vedic usage" (v.40).

* *TVC.* 55-60 refers to Kumbhakonam which is said to be the last place of residence of the Āḻvār. Ibid 50-54 refer to Śrīrangam, as also 119.

** The omen circle is drawn closing one's eyes so that the line drawn by the hand completes the circle correctly. Or else concentric circles are drawn and then they are counted. If the number of such circles is even, success is predicated if odd success is not predicted.

The Lord cannot exist without love *(dayā)*.

> "O Lord of Ranga! Thou who art difficult to obtain through one's own efforts, Thou art running after thy devotees" (v.41).

The Lord of Venkata's star (of descent) is said to be Śravanam whose *adhidaiva* is Viṣṇu. He is the sin-abolisher (v.42). At eventide one could see, says the Āḻvār, the two gods Brahmā and Śiva wending their way together to Venkata in the North (v.43). This particular use of the words "Lord of Venkata of the lofty heights of the north" definitely intimates the northern limit of the land of the Tamils *(Vada-vengadam)*. The Lord on the Hills is eternally youthful *(Kumaran)*. Those who worship this eternal Youth become eternally youthful (even like Mārkaṇḍeya who was a worshipper of Nārāyaṇa, and looked, as the Mahābhārata says, never older than twenty-four, in all three *daśas* (three conditions, youth, middle age and old age).

> "O youthful ones! Do ye seeking refuge go to Venkata mountain in whose gardens is resident the eternal Youth Who, when a child long ago, counted with His feet (toes?) the heads of the punishable demon" (v.44).

He is the treasure-house of the freed and the Gods and men *(vānorkkum mannorkkum vaippu)*.

The Venkata Hill is described as a wonderful hill wherein elephants, lions, yālis, gold, precious stones, pearls and flowery trees, nine kinds of gems, forests and streams and falls abound. Monkeys and huntsmen *(kuravas)* dwell on the Hill (v.47). Indeed it is said to be a treasure-mountain of all desires (v.46). Venkata is therefore sought after even by the immortals *(nitya-muktas)* as something to be attained, for it is verily capable of annulling all sins and curing all diseases, as the

derivation of the word is said to intimate the abolishment of all sins of all three kinds, and of debts of all kinds. Venkata is the mountain of Him who protects gods by destroying the demons with his discus (v.48). Having thus extolled fully the greatness of the Venkata Mountain and its Lord, the Āḻvār deems himself to be highly fortunate. He even compares himself with the Lord. "Who is my equal? Not even God is my equal for I have a saviour whilst He has none" (v.51).

The means to liberation (upāya) is God alone (v.64 and 83). He is the siddhopāya, ready means, as the Teachers say.

> "The Lord Who has the discus, Who appears as if having His love for His devotees itself as His body, granting to them the pleasure of this world, as the protecting deity, Ruler, Heaven, coolness, relations, Mother and every other, Himself finally makes man attain the supreme above" (v.83).

This magnificent verse summarises neatly that the Lord grants all to His devotee. There is no need to look to any other god or deity, ruler or chieftain for getting all that one wishes to live the godly life. Attaining Him one attains the entire freedom of the Universe and can move with freedom and joy in all. God then is both the Means and the Goal. Supreme Blessedness is to be had only through surrender to the One who can grant all, freedom, joy and immortality and freedom from all fear, of debts, of death, of sins.

It is usual for some very eminent practicians of the path of *Yoga* to say that our mind is the cause of all our misery. Of course it is held that when mind is trained it can be an instrument of liberation (*Mana eva manuṣyāṇām kāraṇam bandhamokṣayoh*). Mind unrestrained

is the cause of our fall and bondage, whereas mind controlled is the cause or means of our regaining the freedom. Some however consider that mind itself is an impediment to all progress and its annihilation is necessary. Thus the great *Rājayoga* formula, check the movements of mind—*Yogah citta-vṛtti-nirodhah*—is held to mean a gradual absorption of the mind in its source till we reach a stage of *amanaska* (non-mind). This method has been the vogue in the Buddhist and Jaina schools. The Āḻvār on the contrary holds that mind is not an impediment at all. It can be fixed to the Ultimate Godhead and then it becomes transformed into an instrument of devotion (v.81). An easy way is to accustom it to go to God and Godly objects rather than to earthy objects *(viṣayas)* (v.52). He utters a stern warning against taking gifts from men and others, except God. Thus as a *Yogi* of high calibre the Āḻvār has beautifully expounded the secret of sublimation of mental activities by shifting the object of enjoyment or happiness from the terrestrial and transitory to the eternal and the super-celestial.*

> "Evil men become slaves for money; obtaining sins through gifts, they experience them. They walk as human sacrificial animals in exchange for (another's) head. Ignorant men not praising the Lord as He who drank the poison as different (as nector) from the breast (of Pūtana) experience sin" (v.52).

Thus praise of the Lord is the intelligent man's method of salvation. It means exclusive mental devotion.

> "Let thy mouth praise, let thy eyes adore, let thy ears hear Me. Do thou offer cool flowers bending thy crown low and with hands crossed

* cf my article on "*Sublimation*" Vol. III. No. 3 (Feb. 1942). Aryan Path & J.S.O. 1. Vol. II (1941).

(in reverence), thinking on the Lord adorned with Tulasi garland and high crown, attached to Me from beginningless time" (v.11).

Again:

"No mental suffering will visit one if one but accepts Madhusūdana as Sole Refuge, for *God is man's wealth*" (v. 61).

Or again:

"Those who have meditated with devotion on the Lord creator and are able to fix Him in their minds attain (Him) quickly (v.79).

He appeals to the mind that is hesitant and wavering:

"O Good Mind! Hast thou not seen the Supreme Being? Is He not always (present before thee)? Is He not dwelling in the hearts of all meditators? Know thou that the unequalled Lord is the protector of me and of those like me" (v.86).

He himself says:

"I have made Devotion my vocation" (v.84), "My whole time is taken up with the praise of the Lord" (v. 85) and "Nor shall I withdraw my mind which has only desire for Thee" (v.60).

Asking himself whether there is any need for further individual effort *(puruṣaprayatna)* to supplement or augment God's redeeming grace, the Āḻvār says that God's power is so great that it does not wait on man's effort, which is puny, ignorant and even frustrating. He asks:

"Is it necessary to plant the seed of effort in the field of the ancient *samsāra* of the Tiller, who has killed the bulls? The moving water-

bearing Cloud will reveal the black-cloud form of Nārāyaṇa" (v.23).

There is only one effort to be made, one activity that has to be done, and that is self-surrender and self-offering in an integral manner, with body, mind and soul. There is only continuous praise of God's glory and God's selfness of all, or constant remembrance or *dhyāna* in a triple sense. The rest is in the hands of God.

As already stated, Āḻvār says that this path has already been taught by Śiva Himself.

> "Rudra of right austerity taught the four seers (Agastya, Pulastya, Dakṣa and Mārkaṇḍeya) under the shade of the banyan tree in the previous aeon the Way of Surrender to the Lord who measured the world and is reposing in the Ocean (viz. Nārāyaṇa)" (v. 17).

This fact is more explicitly stated in the earlier verse (v.15).

> "If you are able to worship the Lord after offering flowers to Him who measured the universe, as the gods do, then could you know the manner how the blue-throated (Rudra) was able to retain the poison in His throat, even as Mārkaṇḍeya did know."

Thus the *Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi*, of which an analysis has been given above, lays bare the essential attributes of God, describes the *avatāras* and *arcā* of God, points out the means to the realisation of the Highest Bliss even here and now, and declares unequivocally that the Path of Surrender to the Highest Being alone, who is the Ultimate Cause, is capable of sublimating the human, even as the Lord in the *Gita* states that all tastes are discarded when the Ultimate (*Para*) is seen *(param dṛṣṭvā nivartate)*.

TIRUCCHANDA VIRUTTAM

Tirucchanda Viruttam is a more philosophical poem than *Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi*. If the *Paratattva*, highest category, and the means to its attainment have been taught in the earlier poem, in this work the cosmic categories are dealt with at greater length.

The first five verses describe the categories of existence which are declared to have their source in Brahman—a doctrine adopted from the Upaniṣadic texts. The numerological description of the categories is the *first* of its kind in Tamil literature and it is difficult to understand except with the help of commentaries. It also shows with preciseness the categories as accepted at the time of the Āḻvār.

> Having become the five in the Earth, in the Water the four, in the Fire the three, in the strong Wind the two, in the above (Ether?) the one, becoming distinguished as different from these, Who can know Thy Being? (*TCV.* 1)*

The reference is to the five qualities of sound, touch, form, taste and smell *(śabda, sparṣa, rūpa, rasa, gandha)* which are found in the Earth, whereas Water has all except *gandha*, Fire has all except *gandha* and *rasa*, and Air (Vāyu) has only *śabda* and *sparśa* and Ākāśa (ether) has only *śabda* as its quality. All these are indeed generated from the One which is different from them and is their cause.

The second verse represents the Form of God as, at the same time, the Object of our meditation, of *tapas*,

* It is seen that there is no mention of the Sāmkhyan additional categories of *prakṛiti*, *mahat* (buddhi), *ahamkāra* and *manas*; the Self or God is said to be different from the elements and their Cause. It is clear perhaps that the *ākāśa* is the original material element which is having one quality that becomes all the five qualities.

of adoration and praise, as also as the giver of beneficence. Some things can be objects of knowledge but cannot be deemed to be the givers of beneficence, even like matter; some others can be considered to be beneficent but they cannot be objects of knowledge (*āśraya-śūnya*). God is in Tirumaḷiśai Āḻvār's philosophy both beneficent and and object of our attainment—*śubhāśraya*.

> Being the six[1], the six[2], and the six[3], being (worshipped by) the five[4], the five[5] and the five[6], He Who is the excellent two[7], the three[8], the seven[9], the six[10] and the eight[11], having made distinct the Knowledge[12], being the True and the

1. The six are said to be the duties, *adhyayanam, adhyāpanam, yajanam, yājanam, dānam* and *pratigrahaṇam. Manu.* S.I. 88 ff.
2. The six are said to be the seasons: *vasanta, grīṣma, varṣa, śarat, hemanta and śiśira.*
3. The six refer to the *yāgās* such as *āgneya, jyotiṣṭoma, viśvajit,* etc.
4. The five are said to be the *yajnas: bhūta, manuṣya, pitṛ, deva* and *brahma.* Manu, III. 70 adds a sixth, *mahāyajña.*
5. The five are said to be *prāṇāhutis.* Since no explanation is further given it may be said to refer to the five *prānas* and the offerings to them in the cosmic sense as in the individual sense: *prāṇa, apāna, vyāna, udāna* and *samāna.*
6. These are the five *agnis, gārhapatya, āhavanīya, dakṣina, sabhya* and *avasatya.*
7. The two are said to be God-knowledge and Renunciation of all the rest. But see *Manu* S. IV. 4-5 which mentions *ṛtam* and *amṛtam* (or *satyam*) as the characteristics of the Divine.
8. The three are said to be lordship, liberation and realisation, but more truly the three may be said to be creation, sustention and withdrawal or destruction (*Vedānta Sūtras: janmādyasya yatah,* I. i. 2).
9. The seven are said to refer to practice of *viveka, vimoha, abhyāsa, kriyā, kalyāṇa,* and *anavasāda.*
10. The six refer to *aiśvarya, vīrya, jnāna, bala, śakti* and *tejas.*
11. The eight qualities may refer to the Divine or the liberated or realised soul. *Apahatapāpma, vijara, vimṛtyu, viśoka, vijigīsa, avipāśa, satyākama, satyasankalpa or sukram, akāyam; avraṇam, asnāviram, śuddham, apāpavidham, kahiv, manisi, paribhū, svayambhū* (*Isa.* 8).
12. As Isa. 8 puts it, one perceives the real nature of things, *yathātathyato arthān vyadadhāt śāśvatībhyah samābhyah.*

Deluder[13], the Self of the five[14], He the Lord is verily a magician (Lord of *Māyā, Māyan).*

God in this above verse is described as All. This verse enumerates the several entities, and the commentator, *Periya Vāccān Pillai,* has interpreted the numbers in a way which have been presumably received by him from tradition and since accepted after him.

God has the fullest lordship over all. This is the essential meaning of this verse. Not only God is All *(Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma),* He is the Only one of that kind: *Ekam evādvaitam: Advitīyam:* One without a second of His nature. He is the goal of all paths and indeed He is also the paths themselves. He is the Teacher of all duties to all persons according to their nature so that all may ultimately reach Him, be they *asuras* or *devas* or *mānavas.* He is the *Ṛtam* and the *Amṛtam* and the *Satyam.*

The third verse deals with five-fold powers of the Lord by which the elements or categories get manifested:

> Having made the five (bhūtas) and the five (tanmātras) and five (sense organs) and the five (motor organs) (merge) in the three *(manas, ahamkāra* and *mahat),* and having made them into One *(pradhāna* or *mūlaprakṛti),* and having become the Self of all these (the *Puruṣa* or Ātman), Thou art thus the First Cause: Who can see in the world the Five (transcendent forms of Thee) becoming (established) in the five places

13. Revealing the Good to the Good and bad to bad: or *Isa, Vyūha rasmin, samūha tejas* (Reveal the beautiful nature by removing the hot and terrifying rays and gathering up thy cool and attractive rays).
14. Reference may be to the previous verse or to the five-fold nature of all Reality of which He is the Self of His own five-fold nature as *para, vyūha, vibhava, hārda* and *arca* (cf. *Manu.* S. XII. 124).

for the (enjoyment through) the five (sense organs) and the five (motor organs).*

That God in all His manifestations is the object of enjoyment is clearly expressed. His omnipervasiveness is the basis of His enjoyability in all Nature from the unmanifest to the most manifest. All become instruments for enjoyment of God. Everything is also the seat and the abode of enjoyment. And all are therefore to be realised as such. *Īśavāsyam idam sarvam yat kinca jagatyām jagat*—of the Īśa seems to be interpreted in a wonderful manner; for all are in a sense *bhogopakaraṇa*, *bhogasthāna* and *bhogāyatana* of the Divine which the individual should know and enjoy with the feeling of the Divine presence in all or invoke the Divine in all and enjoy that.

The fourth verse then mentions that the Deity is also the source of all words or vocables or all speech. It does not mean that it refers to either Sanskrit or Tamil but it means all speech. God is thus said to be *sarva-*

* Cf. *TCV*, 77.
"Being the (self of) eight and eight and eight, (24)
Being the One (support of) seven (*dvīpas*) and seven (hills) and seven (oceans),
Being (the self of) eight and three and one (12 *ādityas*)
The Primal Lord is affirmed as the Highest abode by those who have made the eightfold surrender and have learnt the eight (lettered word)—(*Om namo nārāyaṇāya*)".
The five are said to be the *bhogopakaraṇa*, *bhogasthāna* and *bhogāyatana*.
In the verse 77 the eight-fold surrender refers obviously to the additional methods of self-discipline (*svaniṣṭa*) and disciplined faith in the *ācārya* (*ācāryaniṣṭa*), in addition to the well-known six, namely, *anukūlasamkalpa*, *pratikūlavarjanam*, *goptṛtvavaraṇaṁ*, *viśvāsam ātmanikṣepa* and *kārpaṇyam*. Or it may refer to the eight-fold limbs of *bhakti* which are said to be *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhārana*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*.
In all the above interpretations we have mentioned the commentator's point first, and then suggested alternatives.

vācaka śabda. The Veda is His body. So too the great Āḻvār prays to the Lord to reveal Himself to him as his own self *(āvi* or breath and being). He continues this idea in the fifth verse by declaring that All this is Brahman, *nirkinradellām Nedumāl.* He is the material, efficient and teleological cause of all things. This is expressed by a figure of the mythological cosmology:

> The Meru that is supporting Heaven *(nakam),*
> the Earth that is being supported by the directional elephants, the highest Sky that is all happiness *(nakam),* the Supreme Abode *(paramapada) (nakam),* the flowing Ganga that is upborne by the sky, *(nakam),* the clouds supported by the sky, the fire, the incomparable five breaths —all these are supported by the One Being (v.6).

Thus He is the One substance, the support of all. He is the eternal subject and everything is indeed His predicate or attribute *(viśeṣana),* and He is the *Viśeṣya.* Thus indeed do all words refer to the One substance.

The nature of the Deity in relation to His world being that of Substance or substrate to the attributes, the Āḻvār proceeds to describe Him as He is in His own nature and essence.

> Being the One and the two forms,[1]
> Being the Lord of both knowledge and ignorance,
> Creating the One and the two times,[2]
> Being the Lord of the *karmic* earth,
> Making one and two (fires),[3]

1. Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra or Samkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha.
2. The Eternal Time that comprises the *laukika* time and other times or as pointed out, the past, present and the future.
3. The fires have been mentioned.

Wonderful Lord born amidst cowherds (Kṛṣṇa),
Can He who has three-eyes know thee?[4].

The play is with the numbers one and two forming three. The verse reveals that God has three forms according to the functions that He performs such as that of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra, Himself being Viṣṇu known as Janārdana. He is the Master of both the worlds of Light and that of darkness. He has created the three times of past, present and the future. This is for the fulfilment of the *karma* of the souls. He has created the three fires of *gārhapatya, āhavanīya* and *dakṣiṇa* or it may refer to the three fires of Sun, Moon and Agni *(yad ādityagato tejas...yad candramasi yaccāgnu: Bhagavad Gita,* XV). Thus the Supreme has the powers of taking forms and controlling all. He is supreme and surpassingly great. "No one, not even He who has three eyes or Śiva can know thy glory."

The relationship between the gross and the subtle is one of cause and effect. Indeed the bondage that the souls get is due to the effect of ignorance. The relation between the states of cause and effect, says *Peria Vāccān Pillai,* is comparable to that between subdued and flaming fire (v.8). The creator who is the self of all *(cidacid viśiṣṭa-Īśvara)* is a wonderful being (*TCV*.11). It is a wonder of wonders that the utterly transcendent Deity is identical with the person who has taken birth among the cowherds (v. 7) and still more that He is *born* from the wombs of creatures *(TCV*.13).

Mythological theology reveals two things: firstly, the transcendence of God over the created world, which means that it is not opposed to His own immanence. This

4. Kṛṣṇa was born of Devaki and brought up among cowherds. He was born like any one—a *yonija* not an *ayonija*. cf. *Ganganath Jha Research Institute Journal,* 1959.

we have seen already was established by the Āḻvār in his earlier work *Nanmukhan Tiruvandadi*. Creatorship on his part does not imply non-creationship of Himself through descent or self-manifestation or self-creativity *(svayambhūtva)*. The descent is, to use the very excellent expression of Sri Aurobindo a 'coming down of the Divine below the line which divides the divine from the human world or status'. This is the divine birth which is different from the birth that happens to mortals out of *karma* results or for enjoying them. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa has it: *janma karma ca me divyam evam yo vetti tattvatah* (B.G.IV.9) The descent exhibits all the fullness of His creatorship and lordship in the terrestrial scheme. His knowledge undergoes no diminution nor does His *vibhutva* or greatness suffer any restriction. The *avatāra* is a profound mythological or meta-mythological principle of the descent of the creator, self-creating Himself for some occult purpose of delight called Līlā[1] which may be considered to be of the redemptive kind *(dayāsvarūpa)*. Creatureliness is a play on his part if indeed He plays that part.[2] There may be a deeper meaning in the descent for it is capable of infinite possibilities. The apparent fatherhood or motherhood of the creatures in respect of God's *avatāras* is due to the Will of God or His grace so that the devout creatures may experience the delights of such relationships not indeed open to them otherwise. It is the *saulabhya* and *audārya* that are revealed by such acts of affording delight to the souls, enraptured by His beauty. The fundamental *note* in all these relation-

1. cf. My paper on "Concept of Lila". *J. Banaras Hindu University*, 1936.
2. cf. Kulasekhara's "Philosophy of Devotion" or Chapter on Kulaśekhara where Devaki-Kṛṣna, Kausalya-Rāma, Vasudeva-Kṛṣnā, Daśaratha-Rāma relationships are all of this 'inverted kind.

ships vouchsafed to the souls is that they are always conscious of their creatureliness (śeṣatva) and that the relationship is an act of Grace and love bestowed on them by the Lord.

That is why we should make a radical distinction between the birth of a creature which is its ordinary lot as a result of its *karma* and God's. Nor can the secret of the *avatāra* be known except through the inimitable Grace of God, for the Lord's body is love, beneficence, *dayā* as stated in the *Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi*, v. 40. The *avatāra* is the mere or sole manifestation of the Supreme Transcendental Love that is God.

Mentioning the *avatāra* the Āḻvār correctly anticipates the supreme doctrine of descents or emanations of the Divine. The idea of the Divine descending into the scheme of creation, human and infrahuman or suprahuman, is always intrinsic to the idea of a creator God. Since the Universe is of many levels or planes of existence, the descent may be in one or two or three or four or even all the seven spoken of in the Vedas. The *Ṛg Veda* with its concept of three planes *bhūh*, *bhuvah* and *suvah*, speaks of the three-fold births or descents (*Ṛg V.* IV.i.7). It also mentions souls having five-fold births (*Ṛg V.* X.53.5). These are indications of (i) the ascent of the souls, on the one hand, and (ii) descent of the Divine, in another sense. The Upaniṣadic doctrine of the *antaryāmin* and the experience of the incoming of God into the soul (*Īśa*, 8) is clearly a point of illustration. The well-known emphasis on the doctrine of *avatāra* in the Gita (Chapter IV) has made a wonderful contribution to the concept of the descending Divine approaching and redeeming the soul and lifting it up to higher births. Lastly the Pāncarātra doctrine of five-foldness of the Divine

Transcendent in and beyond the creation, integrates all views of the nature of the Divine in relation to His creation.[1]

All these ideas of the *Veda, Itihāsa, Anubhava,* and *Āgama* are as it were grouped in the most luminous verse of the *Tirucchanda Viruttam* 17 by the Āḻvār.

> One Person; in all four persons.[2] Being thus the Enjoyable Being and the Person realised through merit, and the Person of many manifestational forms, O Primeval Lord lying on the serpent in the Milk Ocean and being beyond it, Thou art the Transcendent special Form.[3]

This special doctrine of the *vyūhas* or manifestations is therefore stated by this Āḻvār in most clear and unambiguous terms. The four *vyūhas* are however different from the descents, for they represent the four forms in a unique way, namely the *Turya, suṣupti, svapna* and *jāgrat,* the Being beyond the creation, the creative principle, the sustaining principle and the destroying principle operating in all processes. The One manifests its three forms whilst retaining its superintendence over them. Thus Vāsudeva in the Milk Ocean or Nārāyaṇa looks after the works done by the other three *vyūhas.* The five descents, in a sense to meet the souls, are the *Arcā* (the visible form), the *antaryāmin (puṇṇiyattin mūrti),* the *vibhava* or historical descent *(annil mūrti),* the Vāsudeva (already mentioned as the integral One

1. cf. My *Idea of God,* Chapter VI.
2. Vasudeva, Samkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha.
3. The Transcendent is shown to have a special form which the Divine Lord reveals only to the select few. It is not a *prakṛta* form or form that we usually take it to be in respect of the objects. It is no material form. It is to this that Śrī Kṛṣṇa refers when he speaks of that Form which the sages and gods crave to see and which the free souls steadily wish to perceive—*sadā paśyanti sūrayah.* This cannot be perceived except by the vision of grace.

appearing or functioning as three personalities and the Original Person *(Aka mūrti)* who is the Transcendent Para Nārāyaṇa.

The Āḻvār reveals the running thread of unity in all these forms of the One Transcendent Divine Person. In one sense He is wholly present in each of the forms or personalities that He has assumed out of His self-manifestative power *(svayambhuvah)*. The several forms of the One supreme Person cannot be said to be several jivas or souls. He is throughout One and one only, and all these manifestational Personalities are indivisibly one with Him. God is *unitas multiplex* reality, which it was recognized by the *Āgama* and the Āḻvār, can be true only of the Ultimate Person. He is in *Pāncarātra unitas quintuplex,* the One in five forms. It is this secret of the Person that leads to the concept of personality as the highest category of Reality.

God is described in verse 19 *(TCV)* as the most important Power, as the Subduer of all creatures and as the Teacher of all creatures. A teacher *(śikṣaka)* is one who tames the soul by helping it to subdue its lower nature. The symbol of the bird is used. God taking the form of a bird *(pul)* moves with birds and slays the bird's evil nature and conduct, and yet he has a bird (Garuḍa) as his vehicle or ensign. Still more strange, He lays himself down on a serpent-bed which creature is a food of the bird (Garuḍa). Before Him everything trembles. He is not the inconscient in the bird-form. He is Suparṇa, who is *Veda*. Whatever form He takes He is full of transcendent power and consciousness, endowed with energy, strength, knowledge, and lordship. Be they cosmic or supracosmic or infra-cosmic, the forms are all filled with the essence of the Divine who is infinite (vibhu) unlike the souls. Nor does He tolerate

evil among birds or creatures whose form He takes. All require His teaching and training. He is the Ultimate Guru, assuming the perfect form in each species and plane, and helping the souls in those forms to realise the Supreme Godhead. He destroys the evil in all things or converts them into pure Good. It is wrong to say that He loves the evil things, just because He goes to succour them and train them by all means of correction. The *asura* among them He slays, the *deva* among them he protects and uses, and the mānava among them He saves and uplifts to higher levels. The *asura-mānava* who is unwilling to be saved or redeemed he throws into wombs much worse, which will help it to realise grimly the result of love of the lower nature or the path of darkness.

He elevates all by getting their service, for service transforms the soul. This opportunity for redemption that God offers to the souls to serve Him in any capacity, great or small, glorious or trifling, is His enjoyment and love (kādal). God helps all creatures in every way taking even lowly forms like the tortoise (v.20), the fish (v.30), the lion-man (v.23), so that His devotees everywhere may attain immortality and progress in their life-aims (v.20). In every form of His there are *(svarūpa svātantrya)* absolute freedom and undiminished infiniteness *(vibhutva)*.

After describing in the 22nd hymn that God is the "womb, protector, transcendent, becoming a child rolling the seven worlds up into Nector", the Āḻvār addresses Him thus:

> Thou restest on a fig-leaf. O Primordial God! Thou who wearest the beeful *tulasi*-garland art with the beautiful lotus-born Mother on Thy chest. Thou Lord of the Earth whose body is blue like the Ocean (v. 24).

The Āḻvārs as a rule extol the *avatāra*, and Tirumaḻiśai Āḻvār is no exception to this as already shown.

Conjoining womanhood with manhood Thou hast created!
Thou hast become the Lord of the neuter too and the Ruler of all!
Becoming the Inner ruler of all persons Thou hast made creation evolve from matter.
Thou hast become a cowherd who loves the cows
Thou became false (to the wicked non-seekers of thee) and
Thou hast ever been Real (to the seekers);
Thou art (one who ever resides in) Brahman (a brahmacāri);
Thou art fit to be sought by the universe as supplicant;
Thine form is complex. Who canst know Thy wonderful Form? (nature)?

Or again:

"Transcendent of the Transcendents! Having the Ocean as bed, and enjoying the Supreme Lady residing in thy chest, Thou loving wert born of many human wombs. Lord of the nature of Knowledge! none can know thy greatness as this" (*TCV.* 29).

Again in verse 79 he exclaims:

"Can there be attainment of Him (who is the ruler of the ten (lords) of the ten (directions)? Being the One ordainer of the seven (notes of music) and nine (sentiments, *rasas*), who descended for the sake of the good of the fourteen worlds, ten times into them, and is the One who had incarnated previously?

We have already shown how the Āḻvār has revealed

God's descent as manifesting his glorious attribute of *saulabhya* (accessibility). Along with this easy accessibility go the other attributes of being the controller (*niyāmakatva*), of being protector (*rakṣakatva*) and of being the destroyer (*nāśakatva*). This accessibility also reveals the supreme quality of His being the object of our soul-enjoyment (*bhogyatva*). The Āḻvār laments the bad faith of men who ought to know the accessibility of God.

> "Milk-white (in *Kṛtayuga*), copper-red (in *Tretayuga*), moss-green (in *Dvāparayuga*), and of the hue of the blue lotus enjoyed by the bees (in *Kaliyuga*), the hues taken by Thee will be the hue of the ages. The accessibility of Viṣnu in all these periods not enjoying, what colour is it that men of the earth have?" (*TCV.* v. 44).

The bad and good souls belong to all periods and ages and have a distant hue of darkness (*tamas*) in their natures, a darkness that is incapable of enjoying the Divine who is accessible at all times.

Addressing the Divine, the Āḻvār sings:

> "Thou who hast taken up thy residence on the Earth whilst yet the Ruler of the eternals and art eager to help thy devotees (*mayangi ninror)* and art beyond all thought, Thou who grantest visions to thy seekers and art distinct (from all being the One), O Thou the Cause of my Good, seated on a serpent, O Thou the most perfect being adorned with tulasi garland. What wonder!" (*TCV.* v. 45).

Lest it be said that God being manifest in One Form will not be available in other forms or form, the Āḻvār says that He has no limitation to His omnipervasiveness and omnipresence (*TCV.* v. 47).

God is distant only to the haters of God—to those

whose faces are turned away from Govinda, those whose minds are engrossed in the objects of senses—but not to those who yearn for Him renouncing all desires for objects of the world and for whom He is the only object of attainment.

The Āḻvār worshipped at temples where God's icons were installed in the proper way. Tirumaḻiśai Āḻvār praises God in the form he perceived at the temples he visited. It has been a hoary custom that one should visit the temple of the town one visits and should not come away without visiting such temples. The Āḻvār's praises of the Lord at Śrīrangam and Kumbhakonam breathe the perfect awareness of the presence or accessibility in His cosmic and supracosmic fullness.

Though God is supremely accessible and the supreme object of enjoyment, it is clear that God is also Ruler and Director of *dharma*, possessing the *ugra* or *ghora rūpa*. To the lovers of God His body is *sukumāra* or of delight-giving softness, but at the same time the great *asuras* know that it gives the sense of diamond hardness *(vajra-kaṭhina-bhoga śarīrōyam mahāsurah)*. Tirumaḻiśai Āḻvār recognizes this aspect of the Divine. We see it in the *Viśvarūpa darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gīta*. In the experience of Nṛsimha and Varāha, we have the same fierceness of the punishing Divine. In the same hymn the Āḻvār sings about this co-presence of apparently contrary attributes. His fierce form is enjoyable to his devotees though frightening to the wicked who torture the devotees. The Trivikrama form is a wonderful aspect of the illimitable power of surpassing plenitude—a power exercised against the powers of darkness—a re-

* cf. *Iśāvāsyopaniṣad-bhāṣya* ed. and trans. by K. C. Varadachari and D. T. Tatachari. v. 4. *"tad ejati tadu nai jati tad dūre tadvantike."*

sumption of His own utter sovereignty. Not only do the foes of God tremble before this form, but they flee, unable to stand the fierce righteous might of the Total Divine. The *Ugra rūpa* frightens the wicked but it does not destroy the lover of God. It too is the manifestation of the love that God has, a love that is expressed as *dharma* or law supreme, *Ṛtam*.

> "Entering the hearts of those who with one-pointed mind seated through yoga seek to attain Thee, and residing therein, Thou hast become difficult of perception, O Thou dispellor of sorrows, Lord of Gods!"

In the *avatāra*, there is a splendid fusion of the fierce and the benevolent, of the ruthless purpose of exterminating without remainder all evil and wickedness, both in individuals and objects. Yet, God does not stop short at the destruction of all the obstacles to the devotees, in the form of the *āsuric* or Satanic forces, but goes further to grant them the supreme felicity of nearness to His supramental plane and presence, and makes them enter into Himself.

There is the other truth that all this fierceness exercised against individuals is to make them realise that in themselves they are but finite and cannot ever become divine and mighty. Man is dependent on God, His instrument and servant, conscious and willing if good and knowing, and conscious and rebellious and obstructive if evil and blind—but all the same a tool in the hands of God. May be, man may be conceived as the body of God, but he is moved by Nature with its triple qualities and thus, not recognizing his real Lord, falls into error and evil. He has to be rectified only by revealing that his body-dependency is the root cause of his *āsuric*

nature. To get over this delusion is the first step in salvation or God knowledge. Indeed by causing destruction of all his hopes and faith in his body God releases him from servitude to matter, and helps his seeking dependence in Him alone. Surrender to God then naturally results and even *asuras* seek this aid of God. It is true our *purāṇas* are replete with *asuras* seeking the aid of Gods for their material or power improvement and then turning against the God who can and does maintain *dharma* in the Cosmos. It is the seeking of *kṣudra* or low ends that makes for the formation of *āsuric* natures and they produce sorrow and sin (*TCV.* 67).

Happiness is said to be the goal of all endeavour. But it is not a happiness that is ephemeral but it is that which does not end. Degrees of happiness are to be graded accordingly. There are qualitative differences also in happiness. That which is highest is absolutely permanent, that is God. He alone grants total satisfaction to one's spiritual or real nature. Such a happiness has been said to be *paramānanda. Mokṣa* is the highest *puruṣārtha* or goal of man.

"Is *mokṣa* higher than service to God?" asks the Āḻvār, and replies that even *samsāra* can provide happiness if there is uninterrupted possession of the love of God" (*TCV.* v. 63). Happiness is the experience of the love of God.

> "O Lord decorated with honey-laden *tulasi*-garland! Even though I attain the immeasurable blessedness on reaching *Paramapada*, on separation from Thy feet, the love of Thee, which bound my mind to Thee with ten-fold rope (of devotion) firmly, will itself become my Happiness."

Even if other bodies have to be taken, happiness

will be ordained by God through the love the devotee bears to His feet (*TCV.* v. 84). It is true that this is not something that is got by the individual effort.

> "The immeasurable magician alone must help man" (*TCV.* v. 91 & 92). "Thou art the breath in the body; and sleep along with wakefulness; the five-fold produce of the cow; and their purity is Thee! The attractive products of the ocean are Thee! The air that moves in the ether and the earth is Thee! *I too am Thee!* Thou art Rāma too, my Lord!" (*TCV.*v.94).

The integral experience of God as *Pūrṇa* or All or Full or as filling All, is the highest experience of the mystical religion. Therefore the Āḻvār concludes:

> "Should not the mind seek out that Happiness of being united to Thee alone?" (*TCV.* v. 108).

To be united with God in all conditions and in all births is the highest experience open to man. Bhaktisāra has given a brilliant analysis of the experience of the divine nature in the two works, *Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi* and *Tirucchanda Viruttam,* and provided in broad lines a philosophy of mystical religion.

CHAPTER III

KULAŚEKHARA

Kulaśekhara is unique among the Āḻvārs in many respects. Tradition has it that he was the ruler of Travancore and it is also clear from references in his hymns. Kulaśekhara seems to have had mastery over the Tamil and Sanskrit languages. His understanding of the psychological approach to the object of his religious consciousness is unlike anything that religious or mystic tradition has given to us either before or after him.

In his hymns to the supreme Godhead (Perumāl) called *Perumāl Tirumoḻi,* Kulaśekhara traces the growth of this consciousness. The Tirumoḻi comprises 105 hymns and is divided into ten sections. The hymns reveal a general warming up of the religious passion between the individual soul and God.

The first section shows the soul hungering after Godhead, through praise, for attaining divine vision and divine company. This reveals the eternal lure of the Infinite.

Kulaśekhara is conscious of the Infinite. He felt the necessity of that Infinite to his own finite life. He knew with a deep and profound understanding of the scriptures (śrutis) that the Infinite Being beyond the reach of the finite mind is the One adorable Being who grants existence, intelligence, and peace or bliss that passeth all understanding. He knew that this Supreme Being is the repository of all transcending auspicious virtues capable of taking the individual beyond the worlds of misery and suffering. A touch of God transforms man albeit a sinner.

The Āḻvār always yearned to worship at the shrine of Śrīranganātha on the Kāverī at Śrīrangam.

"The touch of the feet of the Lord it is that had made Śeṣa, the serpent, thousand-headed and fierce, and Kāverī, the river, enjoy the supreme bliss. When shall I have the pleasure of witnessing the splendour of the Lord at Śrīrangam? When will be the day, when I can see the Lord and enjoy Him? When will be the day when I can sing His praise to the fullest powers of my speech? When will be the day when I shall be with the servants of the Lord at Śrīrangam? When will be the day when I shall loudly praise Him and with my own hands offer Him fresh flowers and do obeisance? When will the time come when I shall see without intermission and place my crowned head at His feet? When will the time come when my tears of ecstasy shall flow on seeing the wonderful Lord (*Māyan*)? When will that time come when my mind gazing at His moon-like face will melt into Him? When will that time come when I, a sinner, shall be redeemed through becoming fit to enjoy the sight of the Lord? Moving with devotees with unabating love of Him, singing His excellent names, propelled by love with intense emotion, thinking of Him with teardrops of ecstasy falling like rain, melting throughout the day praising Him, when will that time come when I shall worship the Lord at Śrīrangam where the lordly music simulates the billows of the ocean (in the yonder world) on which He is lying on the serpent, wearing the

discus, awaiting battle? When shall I roll on the floor dancing with ecstasy? When is that day to come when standing before Him with the devotees I too can become as one of them?" (I. 1 to 10).

These ten verses beautifully recapture the manifold ways by which the lover of God conjures up the image of his beloved and develops constant and continuous remembrance. The adoration of the Supreme Being of the nature of pure light having transcendent power in a concrete sense also involving the mastery of the world of *Māyā*, reveals the height of aspiration.

This is the general preparation of the Āḻvār for God-experience. It is true to type and expresses mature religious instinct.

The second group of ten verses reveals Kulaśekhara's attempts to will the conditions necessary for realizing the intimate union boded in the first ten verses. The Āḻvār follows the technique of surrender (*śaraṇāgati* or *bhāranyāsa*) formulated in the *Pāncarātra āgama*. There are six conditions called limbs to be fulfilled by any person who wishes to surrender to God. These six conditions can follow in any order for each is integral to the others. They are, willing the helpful (*ānukūlyasya samkalpah*); renunciation of the impediments (*prātikūlyasya varjanam*), faith that God to whom one surrenders will protect (*rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāsah*), choice of the protector (*goptṛtva varaṇam*), placing oneself at the complete disposal of the protector (*ātma nikṣepa*), and lastly the extreme condition of helplessness bordering on despair (*kārpaṇya*). The last may be considered to be a condition of total nothingness (*akincanata*, lit. not-anything-ness).

The main idea running through this whole decad of hymns is clearly continuous contemplation of all those

who have achieved the union with God through these six ways. The first condition is achieved by seeking the company of those entranced ecstatic souls, and by serving the feet of the devotees of the Lord. The latter grants purity, whereas the former grants *sat-sangh (goṣṭi)*. The company of godly men is like bathing in Gangā, the river of purity. But it is not enough to be in the company of the godly and do their bidding as their servants, it is also necessary to seek their help for further approaches to the highest goal of God-vision.

The love of God that Kulaśekhara finds in the devotees who have realized Him is sought to be induced by a process of sympathetic induction or intuition in himself. The emotional stir in the heart becomes a wave of aspiration tossed by the greatness of the devotees who are themselves wafted by it.

> "For the sake of Him who is in the ocean wherein through His contact the waves are blowing, who is wearing the garland of black basil full of bees, who has a mountain-like broad chest, for Him who has red-lotus eyes, the devotees through being overpowered by emotion, dancing from place to place sing and move about. They have become mad with devotion to my Lord Raṅganātha. To the greatness of those devotees has my mind become attached" (II.8.)

Thus the Āḻvār reveals how there happens the natural and gradual adjustment to the higest object of Religion. What is needed is a spontaneous orientation due to the constant contact with other minds suffused with the love for the Divine Godhead, whose minds are agog, and solely directed to His enjoyment. The finite mind gets lost in the contemplation of God and the free channel for the flow of God's grace. One-pointedness of mind

is more easy to attain when emotionally stirred rather than when it is presented a mere intellectual abstraction or object.

Thus the first condition *ānukūlya samkalpa* is explained.

The third decad of hymns deals with the second condition, the renunciation of the impediments to God-realisation. What has to be renounced is the company of those who are attached to their own bodies and its pleasures or those who deem their souls as the material aggregate. Body-lovers are materialists and suffer from body-soul illusion (*dehātmabhrama*). Pampering to bodily needs takes all the time and energy of some men. Their voluptuous attachment to women and sensual pleasures are real obstacles.

Says Kulaśekhara:

> "I shall not join those who have love for their bodies. I shall not move with those who are unable to leave the contemplation of delicate-waisted women. I shall not join those who are cupid-like. I shall not join those who seek food and clothing and seek to live on in this world. With those who seek low pleasures I shall not join. Nor shall I join those who do not seek God only. I shall not think of the pleasures that one can get from the gods and others (who are but lords of the senses). On the other hand I shall set my mind on the Lord and become absorbed in devotion."

Not content with speaking of the body-absorbed men as unsociable to him, Kulaśekhara goes on a step further and declares, "Others who seek transient pleasures are to me mad men. To them, I am mad" (III.8). This final statement means a definite and basic break-away

from the worldly men and their inverted values. It is common to find mystics speaking of worldly men as sleeping, sleep-walking, as mad, as dead. Similarly they speak of themselves as dead to the world or in a worldly sense, sleeping to the worldly things but awake to the divine. As the *Bhagavad Gītā* (II.69) states it classically, "the night for the wise man is the day time for the rest of the world, and the day time of the wise man is the night for the rest of the world." The values of the world and its goals are renounced or discarded and the mind gets disentangled when it perceives the Divine and His transcendent beauty.

The fourth decad continues in one sense the feelings engendered in the third decad. Even after willing the helpful, and discarding the unhelpful conditions, the knowledge of the Supreme Being or His vision does not arise. Kulaśekhara experiences the distance between himself and God to be great. God undoubtedly is in Heaven, which is a very distant place. But out of His grace He is also present in the temple at Vengadam (Tirupati). This *Āgamas* have stated. For having God's vision, the grace of God is necessary. The Āḻvār, obviously a devotee of Śrīrangam sees in Vengadam the preeminent presence of God whose grace must be sought, and to whom surrender must be made. This is obviously the *viśvāsa,* faith, and also the choice of the protector, the fourth and fifth conditions of self-surrender and self-offering.

Kulaśekhara seeks the Iconic form (*Arcā*) as it is accessible, since the *avatāras* of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa and others are historical and cannot be had, whenever one wants.

Kulaśekhara is clear in his mind that he has to ask of the Divine two things, one, the removal of the *samsā-*

ric bonds that lead to separation from God and put obstacles to the performance of service to God, and secondly, the fullest enjoyment of God in all His forms, an enjoyment which is infinitely superior to the enjoyment of the world and its transient joys of which he was tired.

Says Kulaśekhara:

> "I who am enlightened shall not seek the transient human frame again. I shall seek to be a bird (*kurukay*) in the temple at Tirumalai. I do not pray for Indra's pomp surrounded by immortal beauty of the nymphs (*apsaras*) and the Heaven (*svarga*) but shall seek to be a fish in the streams of the Tirumalai Hills. I do not seek to rule over the kingdom, the joys of riding elephants. I do not crave to see the dance of Urvaśī, Menakā and others and hear their music. Even though I gain the company of the excellent gold-bejewelled Urvaśī, I shall not desire her. I shall seek to be anything on the sacred Hills" (IV. 1, 2, 5, 10).

Thus the choice of what one would like to be is clearly indicated. Kulaśekhara prays for the grace of the Lord at Vengadam. The prayer to be a bird, a fish, a bearer of the spittoon, a step on which tread the servants of the Godhead when they enter the sanctum sanctorum of the Deity (IV.8),* reveals his ardent desire to be near God in every sense, and it is an expression of his devotion (IV. 5 & 6). He also seeks the gift of uninterrupted meditation like the continual flow of the streams of the Hill. The achievement of a complete steadfastness

* It is significant that the Āḻvār prays for a combination of the inconscient and the conscient in his being. He wishes to be inconscient as a stone and at the same time to be able to behold the red lips of the Godhead in the sanctum: *padiyāy kidandu pavaḷavāy kāṇbene.*

and passivity resembling even a stone-like inconscience along with a dedicated interior solely to the Divine Lord of all creation, is a remarkable one. That seems to be a condition for the descent of divine grace.

The utter dependence on God alone however meets with one further obstacle. This is the subtle egoism of 'Mine' and 'I'. This sense of agency for all activity and experience (*ahamkāra*), is a powerful obstacle to higher experiences which are of universal nature. This egoity can be negated only by deepening the sense of 'Self'. God is the real Self, being the Self of all. He is the Ultimate agent (*kārayitā*). God is the *paramātma*, the Puruṣottama, the inner Ruler of all embodied being (*antaryāmin*). By referring this ego or selfness to God, one transcends one's own limited and finite self and its limited consciousness, and makes it attain its real nature which is that of being a body or instrument of His action and the object of His grace.

Cries out Kulaśekhara:

> "I am like a babe which weeps, yet thinks of the mother's grace, though with anger fierce she has thrust it from her face. Even like a well-born girl who only her husband knows, though deeds such as men may mock her lover does, so will I sing, though thou wilt not be my Lord, thy anklets tingling. Like the subjects looking to the rod of the king though he regards them not, I am like a sick man who though physicians cut with knife and brand, yet loves him with a love as long as life. Like a great bird (on a ship) am I which goes around and sees no shore and comes at last back over the tossing

sea and perches on the ship's mast, returning to the Lord's feet" (V. 1 to 5).*

In the above five ways Kulaśekhara expresses his relationship with God to be devout, permanent, and instinctive, as a babe to its mother, as a wife to her chosen husband, as subjects to the ruler. The fourth comparison of God to the surgeon is of a different kind being the expression of the real kindness of God to the soul, who though he gives initial pain also cures the disease once for all.

Kulaśekhara's *Mukundamālā* almost repeats the above sentiments. *Mukundamāla*, 4 reveals Kulaśekhara's desire not to have anything to do with celestial damsels. *Mukundamāla*, 22 reveals that Kulaśekhara considers God to be the Garuḍa to the serpent-like calamities. He is the mystic *mantra* annihilating the enemies on the path (v. 23) and He is the medicine for curing one of the desires which are indeed causes of all maladies (v. 24). He is the life-giving elixir of the three worlds, a crushing remedy for the fears of *samsāra*, and He is the sure way to *śreyas*.

The cry of Kulaśekhara is clearly the love of God that alone can soothen the misery of existence.

> "Though thou wilt not remove my woe, my heart melts not save at thy boundless love. Thy servant more and more wilt set my mind on Thee, though thou wilt not remove my human misery" (v.6, 7).

The love of God is like a river that flows towards the Ocean (v.8). The true haven of man is God, his destiny is God and God is truly the ocean of bliss (as contrasted with *samsāra* which is the ocean of misery

* Hooper's trans: *Hymns of the Alvars.*

and sorrow), which is the natural goal of all rivers, even as the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* puts it.

The sixth decad in a sense takes up the attitude of a ready youthful maiden awaiting the arrival of her husband, or should we say, the return, for in the fifth decad (v.2) the relationship is mentioned of a well-bred and well-born damsel waiting on her husband however much he may be indifferent and unresponsive. Kulaśekhara assumes the simulated role of a damsel among the Gopī-lovers of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was an *avatāra* who lived and moved amidst the devotees both male and female and gave immense love to all equally during His stay at Brindavan on the banks of the Yamuna. Kulaśekhara utilises this motif when he exclaims:

> "The place of enjoyment should it not be in solitude? And the tryst should be kept on the sandy dunes? Yet thou hast not come" (VI.1).

The suspense is excruciating and unbearable. While there is an altogether total dedication and love for the Beloved, it is not selfish seeking God for oneself alone or one's own enjoyment but for the sake of being God's delight. The culmination of a total or integral affection is a total attraction for the being and the body of the Beloved. But it is not to possess Him for oneself but for being possessed by the Beloved, for God is sought by one and all. Devotion becomes supremely self-giving and self-offering body and soul and all only when it reflects the sentiments of *nāyakī-nāyaka* (Beloved-Lover) relation. This significant approach is what the Āḻvār adopts. Most devotional literature in India very early profoundly and profusely illustrates the necessity to adopt the above attitude. The one supreme fact about devotional praxis and askesis is the slow adjustment of the

male to the female attitude in respect of God, and this leads to the great transformation or metamorphosis of love. It is clear that Kulaśekhara felt this *nāyakī-nāyaka* motif (Gopī-Gopāla motif) is unsuited to the male and has perhaps certain disadvantages also. He sees other modes of love and other dedications than that of the sexual eros or amorous self-offering. The mother's affection for the child *(vātsalya)* is something quite different. He saw in Yaśoda's love a mother's love along with the *śṛṅgāra*-love of the other youthful maidens. He got an inspiration in that love, deeply tender, and subtly rich in self-dedication.

Therefore in the seventh decad of hymns, Kulaśekhara tries to approach God with the newly discovered love of the mother to the child. It is true that, metaphysically and theologically speaking, this new attitude of man as the mother and God as the child is a strangely inverted relationship, the truth being that God is the mother and the soul is the child of God. However it is possible to say that it is really the restoration of the significance of the Divine Play *(līla)*, for it is really the Divine who seeks to be born in the world for the divinisation of man, for his redemption and his liberation. Thus in a creative context it is the expression of the divine purpose that man should become the mother of the God-child *avatāra*.

The efficacy of this attitude must be measured not in terms of its metaphysical availability but in terms of the positive contribution to the evolution of the individual to the summit of relationship—the Divine Union and Unity. This is the mystic aim which all these several attitudes finally subserve. This relationship of mother and child between the soul and God is capable of being

realised in the history of religious incarnations, wherein the historical relationships take up the simulation of mother and child. Devakī-Kṛṣṇa, Kausalyā-Rāma attitudes are illustrative of these historical situations. The Āḻvārs accept fully the *avatāra* principle and the mythology and mystic significance of that principle.

Kulaśekhara utilises the mother-child motif as between Devakī and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he himself assuming the role of Devakī. Thus the hymns of this decad are the cradle songs about Śrī Kṛṣṇa now idealised by His mother, who is said to have been shown His transcendent prowess and identity at the time of His birth. Kulaśekhara introduces a pathetic sentiment, for at no time did Devakī actually have this delight of singing cradle-songs as Śrī Kṛṣṇa was taken away from her to be brought up by Yaśoda as her son. It was joy denied to her but given to Yaśoda.

The mystics usually have a high dramatic instinct and Kulaśekhara reveals his unique dramatic sense by simulating Devakī's emotion of motherly tenderness to Śrī Kṛṣṇa as she imagined the babyhood and childhood of Śrī Kṛṣṇa at Yaśoda's place.

The glorious activities and play of the Lord are sung in melodious tunes to the Lord Himself in the form of the infant (Bālakṛṣṇa). The Āḻvār as the unfortunate Devakī who could not enjoy the cradle-days and early pranks and lisps of her divine child, separated from Him by a cruel fate as she was, plaintively imagines the good luck of Yaśoda who had this proud and transcendent privilege. There is the joy of a mother at her son's greatness and glory but sorrow at having been deprived of the joy of bringing Him up herself. This imaginative

reconstruction gives just the intimacy needed for total absorption.

In the eighth decad, Kulaśekhara seeks experience of God as an infant again, not in the person of a Devakī, the *frustrated* mother, but of Kausalyā, the mother who was fortunate enough to enjoy without interruption or annoyance the prattles and plays of her God-child Śrī Rāma. But it is not the childhood pranks and plays that she recalls, but the great deeds performed by Him during His sojourn in the forests of Daṇḍaka and in Lanka. The joy of the mother at her son's greatness is strongly manifested but there is a vein of sorrow also in not having been with Him during those momentous years of exile in Rāma's life. The imagination here is creatively and dramatically intensified by the Āḻvār in order to bring about that transcendent absorption through mother-love. The mother-child role for a soul in respect of God produces sublime cadences and develops profound contemplation freed from the erotic. Sublimation is achieved in a different way.

One may hazard a guess. In ancient times children used to be induced to sleep through song (music) that was melodious and soothening. In a sense education for infants was through cradle songs. They were educated through songs being sung by mothers, songs delineating the heroic exploits of saints and sages and of *avatāras*. *Purāṇas* were sung to the infants. Plato (in his greatest work *The Republic)* indeed speaks of this kind of education through music *(gītam)* for the children. The lullaby is not merely a tune to induce sleep but also to instil the greatest spiritual and mystic truths through the sub-consciousness. Kulaśekhara finds that this not only rouses the finest reciprocity in the child, but also in himself as

mother. Self-education or training for the mother goes along with the sub-conscious education of the child in the noblest possibilities of its own life as a child of God. In the lives of children it develops the love for God and stimulates the desire to be His mate and servant and lover. This is a unique mystic psychology of training practised by ancient Indian households.

Kulaśekhara shows further a deep psychological understanding of the need for separation for engendering constant meditation. It does not matter when and how the separation *(viraha)* happens, and at all times it can induce the feeling of continuous affection and remembrance. That it is available in the beloved-lover separation is well-known and has been more than ever dramatised in literature and life. What is not usually recognized is that the maternal outbursts in separation are of a more poignant though more noble kind. It is to this little known aspect that Kulaśekhara draws attention. His two examples of this sublime passion of the mother to the son have been the unexampled contribution of Kulaśekhara to the mystic psychology of the Āḻvārs. The mother-child motif is played up by some Āḻvārs in respect of the soul and its Guru (called Mother)* but not in respect of soul and God Himself.

Having realised through the sentiment of śoka (pathos) and *vātsalya* the purification of love, Kulaśekhara in the ninth decad experiments with a new motif—the father-son separation. He identifies himself with Daśaratha who had sent away his son Śrī Rāma into exile and laments for his son. Perhaps Kulaśekhara placed this as a profounder pathos and love than the mother-son love.

* Tirumangai in *Madals;* St. Śaṭhakopa in both *Tiruviruttam* and *Tiruvāymoḻi.*

"O my most enjoyable son! Having decorated you to crown you as the city's king I sent you alas into the impenetrable forest listening to the words of your mother Kaikeyī" (1).

Daśaratha was fully aware of the supernatural stature of his son. He was aware of the superhuman powers and glory of the son whom he begot after having performed the sacrifice for getting a son *(putrakāmeṣṭi)*. But he was forced by the peculiar conspiracy of circumstances to send his son into exile. His own plighted word to his wife Kaikeyī prevented him from restraining his son from the harsh sentence of his wife.

The next verse renders the poignancy all the greater. For, instead of hesitating in the slightest degree, Rāma, casting aside his royal robe that he had worn for his coronation, leaving behind the entire paraphernalia, walked into the forest with his bejewelled wife and brother. This revealed another great quality of his son, the absolute imperturbable and unperturbed act of renunciation. The sad end of Daśaratha was envisaged in this deep tenderness of God. The visible tears now turn red, blood-red, each one of them as it were reflecting the sores on the feet of the Lord walking barefooted in the jungles.

Listening to the evil words of the cruel tongue, how did you, my Lord, leaving the citizens of the City, abandoning the elephants and the chariot, entering the forest with your brother and bejewelled wife, walk on? What can I do for you? (2).

The deed recoils on the individual. The consciousness of sin penetrates the inner core of the personality of Daśaratha and with catastrophic results. The impotence of man before God's irrevocable will! Sure enough there was previous *karma* dogging the sovereign, the

misery that he unwittingly wrought on a poor *rishi* by killing his son, now recoiling on him. Love of God as his own son did not avail in this case. This is one of the most significant features of religious consciousness—the sense of utter helplessness, *akincanata*, *kārpaṇya*, which springs surprises as it moves from one sentiment to another, reinforcing each, never for a split second losing sight of the adorable Object, until finally it settles itself in the impotence of oneself before one's fate and feeling of being a sinner (IX.5).

The feeling that he was a great sinner was resounding in every fibre of his being. But he felt also that his dear wife Kaikeyī was a greater sinner. The consciousness of his great sinfulness is different from that of his wife, for in his case it was his hopeless word of promise, not so in his wife's. This consciousness makes the situation even more intolerable and agonizing. The consciousness of sin is already traceable in the feelings of Devakī, and Kausalyā, but in this case it is a positive act of banishment of God from his own presence that makes it grievous. The result is a prostrating pathos of the agonized soul of Daśaratha who was made an instrument of this act. Daśaratha longs for death in the final verse, as more welcome than this responsibility for the exile of his divine son. This suggests also what sin men do incur when they banish God from their hearts and minds.

The shift from the mother-attitude to the father-attitude clearly shows that the parental instinct is bi-focal and Kulaśekhara's analysis representing as it does his own psychological experience shows this admirably.

The last decad approaches the climax. Man's inward history is the same as the history of God. The mystic's recapitulation of the entire Rāmāyaṇa story in the

last two decades is concluded here. The Āḻvār prays to God recounting the deeds of his divine life. The *avatāra* opens up the inward frontiers, breaks up with an alchemical touch the knots of bondage that separate man from his inner and inseparable Godhead. Even this is to be remembered for the glorification of the Lord. This is the method of meditational devotion (*upāsana*) born out of the deepest longing expressed in pathos consequent on fateful temporal separation. One attains the goal of God-union through God-love.

If the order of increasing immediacy or intimacy of human relationships is to be studied, according to Kulaśekhara, the father-son relation leads to greater immediacy than the lover-beloved and mother-son approaches which perhaps are earlier steps. All relations get concreteness in the context of the divine Unitive experience; and out of all of them emerges the one single fact that man depends on God only and that God exists for him only through love, devotion.

Kulaśekhara's poetry is an expression of that inwardness of vision which is dramatized in the soul's travel towards Divinity.

CHAPTER IV

VIPRANĀRĀYAṆA
(Toṇḍar-adip-podi)

Vipranārāyaṇa became one of the most romantic Āḻvārs because he fell from virtue and was redeemed by the grace of God. He earned the title 'Enjoyer of the dust of the holy feet of the devotees of God'* when he attained the love of God fully, through serving the devotees of God.

The *Guruparampara* mentions that he was born in the year 2814 B.C.** in the Mārgasīrṣa month (December-January) under the lunar asterism *Jyeṣṭha* in the village Tiru-Mandangudi. He belonged to the Brahmana *(vipra)* caste and grew up in the traditional way. As he grew up he perhaps followed the vocation of his parents who were tending gardens of *tulasi* and flowers pleasing to God and making garlands for the God in the local temple. Viṣṇu Citta of Śrīvilliputtūr was also doing the same thing at that temple. Being brought up in that pure religious and devout atmosphere, Nārāyaṇa was attached to his vocation, and his garden was well-nurtured and well-laid with fine trees and flower-plants, fragrant

* The *Guruparamparā* quotes from the *Mahābhārata* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* and *Bhāradvāja Samhitā* the following *slokas* to illustrate the practice of wearing the dust of the feet of the devotees of God on one's head for attaining purity, etc.

Mahābhārata:

Nirapeksam munim śāntam nirvairam samadarśanam
Anuvrajāmyaham nityam pūye yetyanghri reṇubhih.

Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa:

Yasya mūrdhni sthitam yāvad vaiṣnavānghrirajaś śubham
Gangādi sarvatīrthāni tāvat tiṣṭhantyasamśayam.

Bhāradvāja Samhita:

Etat samastapāpānām prāyaścittam manīṣibhih
Nirṇītam bhagavad-bhakta-pādodaka-niṣevaṇam.

** cf. *Ancient India;* Krishnaswami Aiyangar, p. 404. The historians at present assign him to the 7th Century.

and pleasing. Whilst he was thus performing his duties, romance came to him in an unexpected manner.

He was a bachelor and had even taken a vow not to look at women. In the village in which he lived there was a bewitching damsel, Devadevī, of great accomplishments. She and her companion were passing Nārāyaṇa's garden one day and rested under one of the trees of the garden. As she was admiring the garden, her companion informed her that the owner of the garden was a deep devotee of God and would hardly look at a woman. Being conscious of her accomplishments, Devadevī vowed to make Nārāyaṇa her own within six months or else become a servant of her companion.

Next day, donning very plain clothes, Devadevī approached Nārāyaṇa. He was lost in his service to God making garlands for Him. After some time she prostrated before him and narrated her story, that she was a dancing girl and seized with the desire to serve God and get away from the hereditary profession to which she was born, she offered him her service in the garden. The innocent saint accepted her devout offer, and permitted her to tend the plants and do such work as she could do.

Some months later, during which she was diligent and dexterous in her work in the garden, one day there was a heavy downpour of rain. The saint went into his hut in the garden. He was hardly aware of her beauty or even looked at her; saw her drenched in the rain, and asked her to take shelter in his hut. He gave her his own dry upper cloth to wear. Then alone did his mind turn outwards and, gazing at her attractive form and beauty and a supernatural seductiveness that had grown around her thanks to her loving service in the

garden, he found in her an irresistible charm. The victory was won, and Devadevī began to occupy the heart of Nārāyaṇa. Devadevī's vow was fulfilled. Thereafter passion took its course. Nārāyaṇa began to neglect his duties to the temple; the brahmanic duties were also slowly given up: his only absorption was this woman. Slowly Devadevī liquidated his property and, as usual in all these cases where true love did not develop out of the original seductive cunning, it happened that poor Nārāyaṇa was turned out of his garden and her house. His infatuation however did not abate.

It was under such pathetic circumstances that Śrī Ranganātha and his spouse, Mahālakṣmī, took pity on his condition, and wished to rescue him from his fatal infatuation for a woman who had turned out to be a gross creature. Taking one of His own golden vessels used daily for performing worship to Him in His shrine, Lord Śrī Ranganātha went in the form of a servant to the house of Devadevī and called her out saying that Aḷakiyamanavālan, the humble servant of Nārāyaṇa, had brought a golden cup to her from him. She took it from him not knowing that he was the Lord Himself. She sent word to Nārāyaṇa to come to her and, impelled by infatuation for her, he ran up to her.

Next morning, not finding the golden cup in the *sanctum sanctorum,* the temple priests reported the matter to the local chieftain. A vigorous search was started. The companion of Devadevī reported to one of the servants of that chieftain that a servant of Nārāyaṇa delivered a golden vessel to Devadevi the previous night. So both Nārāyaṇa and Devadevī were marched to the court of the chieftain. At the hearing of the case Devadevī asserted that Vipranārāyaṇa sent through a servant of

his named Aḷakiyamanavālan the golden vessel which was precisely the vessel lost from the temple. Vipranārāyaṇa denied it and pleaded that he had no servant at all, not to speak of one Aḷakiyamanavālan, as his servant. The judgment was reserved for the next day. Both Nārāyaṇa and Devadevī had to be under custody. That night Śrī Ranganātha, who is also called endearingly by his devotees Aḷakiyamanavālan, told the chieftain in his dream that all this was His work and that, posing as the servant of Nārāyaṇa He had handed over the golden vessel to Devadevī, to reclaim both to the ways of God-love. He told the chief that their humiliation in public for their misdemeanours was sufficient punishment and that they could be released next morning. Accordingly the chieftain released both of them. Nārāyaṇa found that his infatuation for a mere woman was the cause of his fall and saw how, out of sheer kindness, God in his infinite grace rescued him from the depths of disgrace. So too Devadevī discovered the efficacy of the service of saints. Both indeed turned a new leaf.

Nārāyaṇa, conscious of his sheer sinfulness, undertook to serve God more ardently. He vowed to worship the feet of the devotees of God and wear their dust on his head. He found that it is the greatest purifier of all sexuality. The name *Toṇḍar-adip-podi* means the wearer of the dust of the feet of the devotees (*toṇḍars*). He developed purest devotion and began to enjoy the deeps of God's Ocean of divine attributes. The story of Nārāyaṇa reveals that the grace of God works in unpredictable ways. God's grace alone can save a man from going still further down. It is true that his earlier devotions had worked and helped the descent of grace. However

the most important note is the redemptive love of God to his devotees.

Nārāyaṇa composed two important works. The first one is called the Garland (*Tiru-Mālai*) of forty-five hymns. The Āḻvār's story is revealed in a nutshell from the 23rd verse to the 40th. The service of the feet of devotees of the lord without displaying any irreverance to those of them who are born in lower castes is also finely intimated in the verses 39 and 42. The Āḻvār counsels seeing God in all his devotees whoever they are. Obviously his own love of Devadevī was motivated at the beginning out of this sentiment because she showed love of God and he began to permit her to work with him in his garden. But this sentiment was exploited against him by the woman.

The meaning of the word 'outcaste' seems to be something very different from our modern meaning, for it means one who does not see God in his devotees (*adiyārs:* men serving His feet). The Āḻvār constantly remembers the story of the emancipation of Gajendra the elephant, from great danger from the crocodile illustrating the supreme mercifulness of God. The symbolic nature of the ancient story is that *kāma* whose ensign is the crocodile cannot be overcome even by the most pure and devoted soul except through the grace of God.

The wearing of the names of God or rather the chanting of the names of God is the one sure way of getting freedom from all bondage and fear of death itself. In a sense spiritual death comes to one who has become the slave of his senses and sex. Premature physical death comes to one who has wasted his powers. Natural death of course is a result of decadence of the body. Most people are afraid of premature physical

death but not so much spiritual death. Nārāyaṇa had experience of the spiritual and became aware of the other also. Hence his opening verse is significant and reveals the fullest power of God's name. In a sense the Āḻvār had delivered and initiated the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas into the meaning of the *mṛtyunjaya mantra*—death conquering *mantra*.

The second work is called the 'Song of the Morning', used for waking up God in the morning in the temples *(Tirup-palli-yeḻucci)*.

In the mystical symbology the Āḻvār himself is described to be the incarnation of the garland of God *(vaijayanti-aṁśa)*. The story goes that Vaijayanti is the *Vaiṣṇavi-astra* that is capable of destroying everything and everyone against whom it is used. The Asura Mura was destroyed by it. The Āḻvār undoubtedly considers this garland of verses to be such a powerful weapon, useful for attaining freedom from fear of Death, and attaining immortality and *ānanda*, triumph over sinfulness and finally the vision of God.

TIRU-MĀLAI

A translation of the hymns of this wonderful garland of verses is given below:

1. O Lord who art residing at Śrīrangam, O Thou First Being who dost keep the three worlds within Thyself (during dissolution) and throwest them out of Thyself (at the time of creation)! By learning (to practise) Thy Name, the senses and the sinful objects of those (senses) are restrained, and having gone beyond and in a chal-

Notes on verses *serium seriata*:
1. cf. *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, I.3.10-11. *Indriyebhya parā hyarthā. Īśa. Up., Avidyayā mṛtyum tīrtvā vidyayā amṛtam aśnute.*

lenging attitude we have placed our feet on the heads of Yama and his hosts.

2. O Lord of Śrīrangam! I do not wish it, even if I get the taste of the blessed rule of Indraloka in preference to fervently addressing Thee here ever as O Acyuta! possessing graceful body likened to a splendid green mountain, thy mouth likened to the red coral, thy rosy eyes likened to the lotus! O Ruler of the celestials and O tender Chieftain of the cowherds!
3. Even though man's age according to the Veda be hundred years, half of it is passed in sleep; and the remainder of fifty years is spent as a child, boy, youth, in disease and hunger, old age and grief. Therefore I seek not this kind of birth, O Lord gracious of Śrīrangam.
4. Standing in the encircling sins, even Kṣatrabandhu by uttering the three-lettered name of thine (Go-vin-da), attained the Highest state. Lo! even though knowing that our superb loving God of Śrīrangam descends (to save) the devotees who do this much alone, uttering His Name, unheeding men are caught up in birth.

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2. Acyuta means the unfalling, undeteriorating, undiminishing. This is the name of the most Perfect Being. It also means One who does not permit any one of his devotees from falling or sliding back into ignorance, sleep or sin.
3. *Śatamāna* or Hundred years. This is the ordinary duration of human life recognized in the Vedic period. Īśa also mentions *śatam samāh,* hundred years. The following sloka appears to be the translation of the above sentiment:

Āyur varṣa śataṁ nṛṇām parimitam rātrau tad ardham gatam
Tasyārdham ca parasya cārdham aparam bālatva-vṛddhatvayoh
Śeṣam vyādhi-viyoga-duhkha-sahitam sevādhibhir nīyate
Jīve vāritarangacancalatare saukhyam kutah prāṇinām?
—Bhartrhari vairagya S. 107.

4. Birth means the birth-death cycle, a round of life and death.

5. How can those low men, who, seeking to enjoy the pleasures with women, gain great sorrow, eat during nights and live, abandoning their vile ways, think only of their self with mind surrendered, and become slaves of the Lord who wears Śrī on His chest, and a cool *tulasi* garland; how can they sing and dance and attain the status of a complete dependant (on Him) and enjoy the nectar (immortality)?
6. Having cruelty as a wall within and thus attaining the poverty of Heaven, and having this perishable body as the outer cover, ye men, ye know not the hour of your death. Not doing service to the Lord of Śrīrangam, who is the wall of *dharma*, ye remain decorating your exterior for birds to prey upon.
7. Those good knowers of the scriptures, will they care to learn or hear Buddhist and Jaina (*śramaṇa*) doctrines that teach the false *dharma*? Even though my head is cut off I shall not die. That is the truth. Know that the God who conquered Lanka with his bow is alone the supreme Godhead.
8. Disgusted the *śramaṇas*, *muṇḍas*, and ill-fated

5. The abandonment of sexual life and life of senses is necessary. They are the impediments to attainment of the Immortal.
6. The cruelty here referred to is sacrificial cruelty prohibited by Buddhists and Jains, etc. But not doing sacrifices one attains the lack of heaven. Real poverty of course is the lack of God-experience.
7. The original has *śāven:* I am prepared to die, but the commentator Periya Vāccān Pillai takes it as *śāken:* I shall not die because I am immortal.
8. The Ālvār's bitterness is indeed great and to modern minds exceeds the limits as it embraces violence.

7. & 8. refer to the doctrines that hold that there is no soul or that the body is the soul and that it is perishable, or the view that the size of the soul in the embodied states is that of the body.

śākyas speak words disrespectful of Thee, that become insufferable to me; if I should attain my wish, it would be my duty to cut off their heads.

9. O ignorant men! Is there any other godhead to save you when dissolution occurs? Those who worship other gods will not be able to know Him who can save: the Being taught by the Vedic knowledge! There is no other god than He (the Lord at Śrīrangam) to save. Therefore seek refuge at the feet of the Lord, our father, the grazier of the herd.

10. (The Lord) has established the gods in all places. Out of His incomparable love to all those who seek liberation He has revealed Himself in the temple at Śrīrangam. O men of God! Hearken. When there is the rider of Garuḍa (to give everything including liberation), will any one seek to get riches from the goddess of misfortune (*Jyeṣṭhādevi*)?

11. With His unique bow, having built a bridge across the raging Ocean, He slew the sovereign of the *rākṣasas* in battle in order to save the worlds (from *adharma*). O ye who are devoid of grace while in the womb, and do not chant about the one Lord residing in the *sanctum* of

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9. This verse has obviously a reference to the *Vata-patra-śāyī*: God lying alone at *pralaya* on the fig leaf in the Ocean of Dissolution.

10. The gods are the *dik-pālakas* and others who have been assigned functions and quarters and worlds for looking after according to laws of those worlds. Men seeking those worlds of gods go there by sacrificing to them or worshipping them. But one should seek the Supreme God of gods alone for liberation and immortality.

11. The story referred to is that of Śrī Rāma who threatened to dry up the ocean sitting on the grass-seat, *darbha-śayanam*.

the great temple in the high-walled Śrīrangam, ye are wasting your time.

12. When the denizens of Naraka heard the conversation between Yama and Mudgala, that Naraka itself became to be thought of as Heaven, due to having become filled with the Names of God. But these ignorant men forget that His grace is Śrīrangam and His Names, and, having fallen, are caught up in sorrow. For this am I distressed.

13. All dwellers of this earth surrounded by the vast scented ocean, if only these men, though lacking the knowledge for praising the Lord of celestials wearing the fragrant *tulasi*-flower garland, would but utter 'Śrīrangam', then, the entire Naraka in which the senses are caught will disperse.

14. From the mouths of foolish men who do not utter the name of Śrīrangam that has gardens where honey-bees are humming, where peacocks are dancing, whose treetops are approached and touched by clouds and where Indian cuckoos make love-calls to one another, and where the Lord of celestials resides, do you forcibly remove the food they are greedily eating and give it to the dogs!

15. The Lord who has Garuḍa as His flag is true

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12. Mudgala-Yama *samvāda* is mentioned in the *Viṣṇu-dharma*. Heaven is where the Name of God prevails.
13. Śolai: garden or *vaṇa*. *Kenopaniṣad: Tad-vanam*. Śrīrangam is identified with *Tad vanam*. cf. *Tirumāl-irum-solai* is another specific place near Madura.
14. *Īśa;* 4. Śrī Venkatanātha speaks of God being after to those who are outward turned and near to those who are turned towards Him. God is distant to those who have *vaira-bhāva* but near to those who have *sneha-bhāva*. Further He exists for those who think of Him as existing, but makes those who think of him as non-existent non-existent.

to those who are truthful; to those who are untruthful like me is He untrue. To those who are seeking to become regenerate He Himself, after granting the knowledge that He is the Only One Person, cuts asunder the doubts by revealing the beautiful City of Śrīrangam.

16. At the time when I was a gambler and a thief and, caught in the net of a woman's fish-like eyes, was helpless, was it not the Beauty of Śrīrangam who called me, entered into my mind and made my love increase for Him?

17. Though respectfully standing, I was not singing praises nor folding my hands, not knowing that there was one Supreme Lord. So that my hard mind could like iron be melted little by little, the sugar-like Lord, who had taken up residence in the great Śrīrangam surrounded by gardens where bees are humming, has become the Object of my eyes.

18. In the midst of the shining cool waters where the beating waves sound pleasantly, the lotus-eyed Lord is staying as Ruler. On beholding his lovely red lips and eyes, cool tears of delight flowing copiously from mine eyes have, alas, prevented me from enjoying more of Him! Unblessed me! What shall I do?

19. Seeing the Lord of the colour of the Ocean, rest-

15. The reference is autobiographical in this hymn.
16. Autobiographical reference.
17. The passionate love of God returns to the Āḻvār and fills his eyes with tears as he contemplates God's love to him which intercedes and teaches him the truth of his being.
18. Tears of love are precisely the emotional expression of the yearning for intimacy with God. Devotion arises from the contemplation of the vision of the form of the Divine Lord. Āḻvārs delighted in the Form of God—not the impersonal but the personal was their starting point.

ing on the serpent having placed His crowned head to the eastern direction and His feet to the western direction, showing His back to the North and gazing at Lanka in the southern direction, my soul has begun to melt. O Dweller of the Earth, what shall I do?

20. If the devotees but perceive the wonderful person in Śrīrangam surrounded by the waters (of Kāveri), lying on the serpent, His chest adorned by Śrī, His body like the emerald (green), and His broad shoulders, His eyes like the pure lotuses, His lips red and His mouth like the coral, and His crown long and glorious, and the general effulgence, they would grow vast.

21. If the mind which from beginningless time has been going towards other things is directed towards the coral-red-lipped Lord of Śrīrangam in submission, then it is possible for the mind to know the wonderful purpose of the resting of

19. The melting of the mind is the result of beholding the form. This is the experience of going into God. The heating agent is God's Form or Beauty: the attractiveness of the Grace Beneficent flowing out of Him, the subjective nearness to God, achieve the flow of the soul (conceived as a river as in the *Mundaka Up.*) into the Ocean of God. The posture of God shows the usual custom of sleeping with the head to the east and legs to the west and lying on one's left side.

20. The soul melted flows into the Ocean and spreads all through, *sarva-gata.* The rain-cloud of God may be conceived as the *dharma-megha* which opens up the soul not as a static entity but as a dynamic force or divine energy embracing God. It is in the entry into God that one begins to *know* God inside and outside. The purpose of the Divine descent into the forms of *Arcā* (Icon) and *Hārda* (Inner Ruler) and as *Vibhava* (*avatāras*) can only be known when one melts and flows into God through love that extinguishes the ego and lives for the Divine.

21. No one can know the glory and purpose of the Divine Lord unless he turns away from his own senses that are outward-going, and turns towards the Godhead melting in passion of the Lord.

the emerald-hued Lord in the beautiful golden Meru-like temple in Śrīrangam.

22. The declarations (of the scriptures about the Lord) are but statements about just a portion of His greatness; except for those who have turned away from falsity, incapable is He of being known. O Poor mind! Say thou whether the hymns sung by us, who have surrendered ourselves to Him who dwells in those who have sought refuge in Him wholly and live and experience Him, are adequate.
23. Though having beheld our loving Supreme Master, God, resting wonderfully in the temple surrounded by gardens at Śrīrangam, set in the midst of the flowing waters of Kāveri, purer than Ganga, I am living forgetting Him. Poor me! Poor me!
24. In the temple of Śrīrangam, surrounded on all sides by the gardens watered by the floods of the Kāveri, though having seen the restoring posture, the lotus-eyed and lustrous face of the Lord, O mind! you have not known that He is the One (without a second). You are making false devotion and in that falsehood you are spending your life.
25. I have lost the brahminhood that comprises in

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22. Though God has incarnated on the Earth, man has not turned towards Him. Nor has he cried out to Him in anguish and suffering. God has come, says the *Mahabharata, Drona* Parva, 29-32-34, in four forms, of *Arca* and *Avatāra*. Yet men do not go to them.
23. False devotion is devotion for selfish ends and material welfare, not for the sake of God. Man loves God for his own sake, not for the sake of God Himself who is the Perfect, Infinite, Good.
24. Even the loss of brahminhood is not comparable to the loss of the love of God.

bathing and worshipping the three fires without any faults in performance: nothing is it to me. In respect of Thee have I become bereft of love; with what shall I regain it, O perfect Lord! O Lord of the Ocean-hue! O Lord, dweller in Śrīrangam? I am imploring thee with loud cries: "Make me thine object of mercy and deliver me."

26. I am not spending all my time in offering flowers at Thy golden feet. Nor am I speaking faultless words describing Thine auspicious qualities. Nor have I even connected my mind lovingly with Thee! Therefore have I done to Thee nothing, O Lord of Śrīrangam! For what purpose then have I been born?

27. When the monkeys were lifting and carrying mountains to build the bridge across the Sea, the small and tender squirrels carried particles of sand by bathing in the sea and rolling on the sand and bathing again in the Sea. I am not like them even! I, who am ignorant like the trees, hard in the mind and deceitful, and not doing any service, am getting lost!

28. The Lord of light, incomprehensible to Brahma and the other gods, came running in anger against

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25. Though the individual soul is not perfect, the Divine Lord takes up the task of making it perfect. The thirst for God is what is given by God Himself through His presenting Himself before the soul, and then He alone leads the soul to that Ocean that quenches all thirst. He is the *neta* (leader) and the way. God is the *upāya* and *upeya*—the means and the goal.

26. Observing the service done by the meanest and tiniest to God, the Āḻvār feels the necessity for doing his bit too. Gratitude is the sign of free worship and *kaiṅkarya.* (service).

27. The Lord remembers the soul's surrender and does all, but the soul even after surrender tends to forget its surrender and suffers.

28. The reference is to the *Gajendra Mokṣa* episode. In the sym-

the crocodile that feeds on red flesh, for the sake of (saving) the elephant. Have we any burden in respect of our selves? Why am I born without doing service to Him, our Master, our Saviour, who sees not the faults of ours who are like His dogs?

29. I have no place nor plot of ground, nor relative nor friends. On this earth I have not attained Thine lotus feet. O supreme Godhead, O luminous cloud-hued form! Kanna! I implore Thee, Lord resident at Śrīrangam! Who else have I except Thee to protect me?

30. In my mind there is no purity. In my mouth no words of affection have I. In anger I utter words of piercing insult. O Lord, wearing the fragrant garland of *tulasi,* residing at Śrīrangam surrounded by the river Ponni (Kāveri)! O Master, Who have me as Thine slave! Tell me what way is open to me.

31. Neither do I belong to the family of *tapasvins,* nor to the wealthy class; nor am I anything to my relatives, like brackish water! Having become enslaved by the crimson lips of ladies, I have become a knave! O Lord of Śrīrangam! Thou hast in vain given me this birth!

32. O Kanna, having a body like grouping clouds! Thou who residest in beautiful Śrīrangam, sur-

bolism, *Gajendra* is the soul, the crocodile is the charms of life. The world, in which the soul seeks to find worshipable goods for God, also conceals the forces of desire (*kāma*; the crocodile is *kāma lānchana*). The reference to the dogs is really a wonderful allusion to the servants of God, who are watch-dogs of God, cf. the names of the Vedic Rishis such as Śunashepa, etc.

31. The Āḻvār reveals his humility, his distaste of all, including his relatives. It is just possible to construe the hymn as referring to himself as being treated as brackish since he had

rounded by groves where bees are humming tunes! Knowing not any means to attain Thee, have I become a knave among men, and stubborn. Stubborn am I, stubborn am I.

33. Having let go all that is true and having got fully caught in the snares of women, I have become shameless, O Master Lord of Śrīrangam! Out of desire for Thy grace have I come and stood before Thee. Alas! false am I; false am I; false am I.

34. Not having the knowledge of the ever-indwelling Lord in my heart, I have become ignorant. I became a willing slave, pretending devotion. Knowing that Thou knowest by Thine indwelling all the thoughts of the devotees, I was ashamed and laughed within myself to the extent of splitting my ribs.

35. My Lord who once for all assumed the rulership of the worlds by covering it (with Thy feet in three strides)! None other than Thee will I serve, O red-lotus-eyed God! (My) Breath! (My) Nectar! O my indwelling Self; Sinner that I am, I shall not think at all of any other (God) but Thee!

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fallen into the company of low women. The plural use of women perhaps is an exaggeration not borne out by his own story.

32. Triple mention of stubbornness on his part reveals his awareness of the bodily, mental and vocal stubborness (*mano-vāk-kāya*).

33. Similarly the triple mention of falsity refers to the mental, vocal and physical falsity on his part.

34. Some wear the name of God and assume his form also such as Puṇḍraka Vāsudeva (*Bhāgavata*). They do not know the temple wherein he resides. They are materialistic theists (*cārvākas*).

35. *Seviyen unnai yallal.* Losing Thee, only myself and others remain and in neither do I find any possibility of Union.

36. Lord who lifted up the mountain and protected the cowherds and cows from terrible rain! O Lord of the river of sweetness! Thou art going away without looking at me who am struggling, caught up in the net of the deer-eyes of damsels. O Primeval Person, Dweller in Śrīrangam, it is Thee I am calling out to!

37. The supremely effulgent person residing in the temple of Śrīrangam girt by the muddy waters (of the Kāveri) is my father and mother too! Has He not to remove my distress from me saying "This my boy is fit to be helped out?" This, however, my Saviour does not say. Alas! Is it not His nature to hear the cries of agony?

38. O Lord who resides in Śrīrangam girt by waters (of the Kāveri)! It appears Thou appreciatest those who, after giving up their materialistic view of life, know rightly the truth (of the soul) and learn the service of Thee is the sole end to be sought, and, controlling their five senses, severing themselves from every other goal and means and rejecting the wrong ways in themselves, stand at Thy gateway (seeking service).

39. Is it not better to be born in the lowest caste with service to Thee, than those who have practised *Vedas* without remembering that service to

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These two are expressed by the second letter of the pranava U, and *namah* in the *mūla-mantra.*

36. This reference is to the Govardhanagiri incident in the *Bhāgavata,* when Śrī Kṛṣṇa subdues the autocracy of Indra.

37. The Āḻvār almost bewails that God does not hear his cries.

38. Commentators consider this verse to be a crucial verse as it gives the gist of the teachings of *prapatti* and *kainkarya* as expressed in the *mantras* known as *dvaya: Śrīmannārāyaṇa-caranau śaraṇam aham prapadye. Śrīmate Nārāyaṇāya.*

39. God-service is higher than Vedic knowledge in a sense: but the tendency has been to differentiate the two. The *Veda*

Thee is the sole goal? O Thou wearer of *tulasi* on Thy crown! Lord of Śrīrangam! Does not the service of Thine feet by Thine slaves bring delight to Thee?

40. Lord who has Śrī and Śrīvatsa on Thy chest and resides at Śrīrangam! Even though all the earth-dwellers are having world-quaking sins, if they keep Thee in their hearts firmly, then they will not experience the results of their sinful acts.

41. Even if they be cruel and torture others, if they would but address Thee as "O, Dweller Eternal in the Supreme Abode, incapable of being known even by the celestials, O thou wearer of the honey-laden *tulasi* garland on Thy Crown," and offer to Thee lovingly nectar-like food, then by itself they would become sinless.

42. Thou, O Lord of Śrīrangam of high walls, hast instructed thus: "O ye (souls) who follow the traditional knowledge of the four *Vedas* faultlessly! Even though the devotees of My feet (*adiyārs*) are born of the lowest caste, tell them the highest truths, and learn from them, for they are My equals."

43. Though they be born of the brahman caste, supreme among Thine devotees, learned fully in

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truly understood teaches the service of the Ultimate Godhead as the final emancipating and satisfying principle.

40. Constant remembrance of God within oneself is the surest way to abolish the *sancita* and *prārabdha*, results of actions done in previous or present life.

41. The worship of the Ultimate Cause is necessary for liberation as well as knowledge: *Kāranamtu dhyeyam.*

42. It teaches that the higher castes must teach the highest truths to the lowest and lowliest devotees of God. The *Gīta* teaches that one must instruct other devotees of God.

43. The Brahmana hymnist here teaches the doctrine of God-caste as the only caste permissible. One should serve the

the *Vedas* and their excellent six subsidiaries (*angas*), if they speak disrespectfully of Thine devotees of other castes, then that very instant they would become outcastes, O Lord of Śrīrangam!

44. While He of the matted locks (Rudra) in which is flowing the lady Ganga and the four-faced Brahma, unable to know Thy full nature, for a very long time performed *askesis*, Thou went Thy way to save the elephant caught by the crocodile even as the eternals were looking on with wonder. O Hard-hearted Lord! What is the means to attain Thee who art Thus?

45. These hymns of Kannan Who slew the mad huge elephant in Mathura city which had very beautiful and silver-white palatial buildings and Who is now residing at Śrīrangam, Who is the lover of His devotees, done by Toṇḍar-adip-podi, who does service by making *tulasi* garlands to the Lord, even if they be faulty in poesy indeed will praise the Lord.

The Āḻvār reveals an excessive faith in the power of the Name of the Lord when he says that even the *asuras*, who torture others and are cruel, will be freed from sin by uttering His Name. There can hardly be any change of nature without seeking the Name of God. Surely the Āḻvār also is aware of the fact that One should attain

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adiyārs of God even as they serve God. The true devotees of God are *jñānis* and a jnani has been stated to be the very Divine Himself—*jñānī ātmaiva me matam*, says the Lord.

44. God is Transcendent—beyond the comprehension of the residents of the highest created Universe. *Śaraṇāgati* is the one sure means to attainment not only of the Lord in this world and in the heart but also above the worlds and creation itself.

the Transcendent God, beyond the realms of the celestials. Thus the *Tiru-Mālai* is a garland of hymns which, whilst praising the glory and the grace of God, also assures the souls that are in agony and sorrow that service should be the goal of man and not any other. Problems of social concern such as the relationship between the devotees of God belonging to the several castes are also solved by the counsel of mutual instruction and helpfulness and equality. But obviously the Āḻvār is not concerned with the types of service demanded by the temple functions which each individual can do. Mystic experience and social organization seem to be yet in a state of fluidity, and mystic experiences seem to have the effect of disrupting the social organizational moulds. That they have the effect of breaking up the rigidity of the social organizational castes and functions, and restoring a fluidity in the organization which is a dynamic system wherein the individuals have changing functions and properties, is a truth that we see revealed in the final verses of this composition.

As already said this is a *mantra* of the *Tamil Veda—Divya prabandham*—with which one can defy death.

TIRUPPALLIYELUCCI

The second composition of the Āḻvār Vipranārāyaṇa is called *Tiruppalliyeḻucci*, the Song to wake up the Lord. It is usual in temples, when opening the doors of the sanctum sanctorum, to sing the songs announcing the dawn of sunrise. The Godhead reposing in sleep is awakened with appropriate announcements about the sunrise and the arrival of the gods and men to worship Him early in the morning. Three times are prescribed for worship of God, namely the morning, noon and evening. These are *sandhya* (meeting) times. God is the ever-

awake one whilst every one is asleep. Indeed it is certainly a type of anthropomorphism to sing about morning, noon and evening to God. But they are the hours prescribed for the worship of God (*ārādhana*). It is our morning that we announce to God offering ourselves to service of Him.

Arcā is the pivotal concept of the Deity and is absolutely necessary for man's imagination. Psychologically it is true that nothing can be an object of thought if it had not been an object of perception. It is possible and absolute also that the object perceived should gain meaning and symbolic interpretation and historical justification by means of the thought-processes that draw their power and ability from another plane of existence and reality. The *Arcā* in *Pancarātra* adopted by *Viśiṣṭādvaita Bhakti* clearly points out that it is the Light that leads to yonder shore of Being, namely, the *Para*. It is significantly the *Pancarātra* version of the *Arcā mārga*, the path that starts with the luminous spiritual physical form, which is capable of being loved and entered into as the Āḻvārs have themselves shown.

The morning Salutation and prayer is a song of awakening and necessary for feeling the presence of God, when awake, in all that one does. The poem is a moving representation of the yearning heart eagerly awaiting the dawn, even as a lover awaits the arrival of the night or as an ardent man impatiently awaits the day for joining service.

1. The Sun has come up on the eastern mountain top. The night's darkness has completely gone. As the beautiful morning has come, big flowers have blossomed and honey is dripping from them: gods and kings have arrived and are standing

crowding on the opposite side: elephants, male and female, that have come with them, and the trumpets, are making loud noises in all directions like the noise of the billows of the Ocean. Therefore O Śrīranganātha! wake up from Thine sleep.

2. The morning wind is blowing, gathering the fragrance from the jasmine creepers: the swan-couple lying on the lotus-bed shaking off the dew drops from their wings have gotten up. O Śrīranganātha, Who removed the great peril of the suffering elephant caught between the huge teeth of the crocodile, wake up from Thine sleep!
3. The rays of the Sun have spread in all directions: the stars in the sky have lost their lustre: the bright cool Moon has become pale: darkness has passed away. The gentle wind blowing over the yellow gardens through the branches of the beetle-nut trees is spreading their aroma. O Śrīranganātha, Who have in Thine beautiful hand the extremely powerful luminous discus, wake up from Thine sleep!
4. The sounds of the huge and tender buffalows moving, the flute songs of those cowherds who had untied them, the jingling noises of the bells tied to the necks of the cattle, these have spread in all directions. The honey-imbibing bees have all moved out of their hives. O Śrīranganātha! Master of the celestials! Protector of the sacrifice of Viśvāmitra, Who destroyed Lanka's *rākṣasa* hordes, weilding the bow, and Who was anointed and crowned ruler of Ayodhya and ruled for the purpose of destroying enemies of light and truth! Wake up from Thy sleep!

5. The birds in the flower garden have woken up: the night has passed away: the morning has come: the sounds of the waves of the sea are coming from the east. The celestials have arrived with beautiful garlands made of manifold flowers humming with honey bees, to offer them at Thine holy feet. Therefore, my Master, O Lord of the temple where the Ruler of Lanka (Vibhīṣana) serves Thee! Wake up from Thine sleep.
6. Ādityas with their bejewelled chariots, the Rudras eleven governing the worlds, the peacock-riding six-faced God (Kumāra), Maruts, Vasus, and Aruṇa, coming in procession, crowding with all their horses, chariots and songs and dances are arriving with Kumāra (leading). They are standing before Thy shrine to catch Thy sight. Therefore, O Śrīranganātha, wake up from Thy sleep.
7. Indra has come on his elephant to the gates of Thy temple, O Master. And the hosts of the gods of creation, and sages, rich with strenuous austerity, and Maruts, Siddhas, Vidyādharas, press on one another very close, and Yakṣas who are in love with Thine beautiful feet (have all arrived). There is no space left either in the sky or on the earth. O Śrīranganātha, wake up from Thy sleep.
8. The fragrant gods devotedly carrying to Thee great treasures in their hands (have come). Kapila (cow) and the mirror and other things (for Thy morning toilet) have been brought to catch Thine sight first (being auspicious). The good

Sun spreading his great light has risen up, and darkness has completely been removed from the sky. Therefore, O Śrīranganātha, wake up Thy sleep.

9. Faultless *mṛdangam,* single-stringed *vīṇa, maddalam* and *flute* are being played by Kinnaras, Garuḍas and Gandharvas on all sides. All through the night the great saints of austerity, the gods, Cāranas (worshippers of Thine feet), messengers (of Thy will), Yakṣas, (satirists), Siddhas (in Yoga), are anxiously awaiting crowding to touch Thy feet. Therefore, so as to bestow grace-sight on them, O Śrīranganātha, wake up from Thy sleep.

10. Fragrant lotuses have bloomed! The Sun has risen above the roaring waters of the eastern sea! Slender-waisted ladies having bathed in the river, rinced and shaken off the water from their tresses (and tied them up), and wearing their clothes, have got up the banks (of the river Kāveri). O Śrīranganātha, girt by Kāveri river. Who have accepted me, the rejoicer in the dust of the feet of Thine devotees (Toṇḍar-adip-podi), carrying in his hands the *tulasi* garland as fit object of Thine love, wake up to bless Thy devotees.

This song is recited in all the Śrī Vaiṣṇava shrines at sunrise before the doors of the *sanctum sanctorum* are opened. This is the *Suprabhātam* hymn for Śrī Viṣṇu whose *arcas* (iconic forms) are the four great shrines at Śrīrangam, Tirumalai, Kāñcī and Melkote. So the words of Toṇḍar-adip-podi have been immortalised in all temples.

CHAPTER V

TIRUPPĀṆ ĀLVĀR

Tiruppān Āḻvār was a saint belonging to the caste of untouchables (*pancamas*). He has sung only ten verses. These ten verses are just the expression of the revelation of the form of God granted to him as he entered or rather was taken into the *sanctum sanctorum* of Śrī Ranganātha's temple at Śrīrangam.

Tiruppān Āḻvār is also called *Muni-vāhāna*, one who has the Muni as his vehicle. The story runs that Tiruppān Āḻvār used to pray to God Śrī Ranganātha every day from a distance standing on the banks of the river Kāveri. His songs were considered to be sweet and enchanting. He was called Kavīśvara (lord of poets), an appellation that is granted to the highest types of hymnists. Obviously the last of the compositions is this Revelational Hymn.

One Lokasāranga Muni was the servant of Śrī Ranganātha shrine doing the service of taking holy water from the Kāveri to the shrine for the bath of the iconic form of Śrī Ranganātha. One day he found the Āḻvār near the place wherefrom he used to fill his pot with water. It was his custom not to speak when taking the water to the shrine. So he threw a small stone at the Āḻvār, which struck him. It hurt the Āḻvār and blood began to flow from the wound. The saint who was in a trance woke up from it and moved away from that spot. He felt that he had committed a serious mistake in standing at a place from where the water for the shrine was to be taken.

After performing his ablutions and bath, the Muni filled the vessel with water for the bath of Śrī Ranganā-

That night the Muni had a dream. In the dream the Lord Śrī Ranganātha ordered him to carry the Āḻvār on his shoulders into His presence in the shrine. Thus ordered, next morning the Muni repaired to the banks of the Kāveri and saw the saint as usual in his place singing songs in praise of the Lord. The Muni respectfully approached him and told him of the command of the Lord. The saint protested but the Muni said that he had orders to carry him on his own shoulders so that there would be no pollution. The saint agreed to mount the shoulders of the Muni and the Muni carried him into the shrine.

On entering the shrine the saint went into a rapture. He beheld the auspicious form of God till then inaccessible to him. He saw the Lord from His feet upto the crown. His last words were most significant: "The eyes that have beheld the Lord can see naught else." So saying, he entered into the icon.

A translation of these ten verses is hereunder given to reveal the spontaneous beauty, moral exaltation and spiritual refinement manifested in every line.

1. O Taintless Lord (*amalan*)! Origin of all! O Thou who hast made me the servant of Thy devotees! Resplendent (*vimalan*)! Lord of the immortals! O dweller on the mountain-top of Vengadam! Immaculate Lord (*nimalan*), Holy (*nirmalan*), Upholder of the right (*nītivān*)! Verily Thy lotus-feet have of themselves entered into my Vision (eyes).
2. O Lord! Thou grewest into cosmic size desirous of measuring the three worlds that extend to the upmost limits of space, where Thy feet were worshipped by Brahma and other gods (immortals)! Thou art Rama, the destroyer of the *rākṣasas*, with sharpest arrows! O Lord of Śrīranga

of fragrant gardens! My mind indeed has got entranced in the red cloth Thou wearest!

3. Thy dawn-coloured cloth round the waist has come into vision along with Thy navel, the womb of Brahma, and has absorbed my breath and heart! O Lord who residest in Northern Vengadam where monkeys jump and immortals meet to worship Thee.
4. Thy waist-girdle is now absorbing all my attention by its beauty, O Lord of Śrīranga. Thou art indeed He who defeated the King of Lanka girt with mighty walls, and cut off his ten heads with Thy arrows! O Lord of the colour of the Ocean (blue)!
5. Having destroyed my heavy load (of sins), Thou hast made me love Thee, and for having done so, entered my heart. What great and severe penance did I do, I know not. The chest adorned with Mother Śrī and the pearl-garland, has made me the slave of its beauty.
6. O Śrīranganātha! I now behold Thy gracious neck that proffers me deliverance and divine life! O Lord who delivered the wearer of the digit-moon from his sin! Thou art the father residing in Śrīrangam that is surrounded by flower-gardens buzzing with honey-bees. Thou art He who during *pralaya* swallowed up as nectar all the worlds with all mountains and the worlds beyond!
7. Thy lips have enslaved my mind. O Lord, Who art a most wonderful Person, holding in Thy hands the beautiful conch, and the disc which is death to Thy enemies! Thy beautiful body is like the mountain green. Adorned with *tulasi* gar-

land and wearing the crown of sovereignty, Thou art my father residing in Śrīrangam which is an ornament, reclining on the serpent-bed.

8. Thy dark broad eyes shining with red lines and with long eye lashes have entranced me truly. O Lord! Thou tore the body of the great asura (Hiranyakaśipu), being the saviour of the immortals. O Primal Cause of all! O Pure Person residing at Śrīrangam!
9. The blue body of the Divine Child on the banyan-leaf has now come wholly into my View. He verily swallowed up the seven worlds. He, now residing at Śrīrangam seated on the serpent-bed adorned with garlands of gems and pearls, is incomparably beautiful.
10. The cloud-coloured cowherd with his mouthful of butter has truly stolen my heart! These mine eyes which have beheld Him, the transcendent Lord, my ambrosia, residing now at Śrīrangam, can see naught else!

These verses have had important symbolic and mystical meanings which the commentators like Śrī Venkatanātha have expounded at great length.

The mystic experience of merging in the Divine or the Ultimate, witnessed both in the case of Pān Āḻvār and Godā, is one of greatest significance. This happened also to the Śaiva Saint Nandanār, and others.

CHAPTER VI

TIRUMANGAI ĀLVĀR

Tirumangai Āḻvār is one of the romantic personali-
s in the galaxy of mystics. He was also known as
rakālaṇ (Beyond Time). He was also known as *Kali-*
wamsin (destroyer of *Kali*, the spirit of degeneration
l evil). He was a petty chieftain. He was in many
pects a dynamic figure, ardent in love, spectacular in
deeds, a rebel and a social reformer, even a kind of
bin Hood, and, above all, an exquisite lyricist. Be-
ning a devotee of God through love of a Vaiṣṇava girl,
o was unwilling to marry anyone, however eminent in
ıer respects, unless he worshipped Viṣṇu, he later be-
ne one of the most voluminous hymnists of Śrī Vai-
ıva religion. The story goes that the girl whom he
ed insisted that he should feed a thousand *bhāgavatas*
lay for a period of a year. For the sake of the love of
: woman, he began to develop love for God and won
nething richer than the love of the woman, the love of
d. In this we can see the supreme quality of one-
nted devotion to the ideal of beauty which was natur-
y shifted, thanks to the spiritual midwifery of his wife,
the Beauty of beauties. This story has a parallel in
: life of one Villi (Dhanurdāsa) during the lifetime of
Rāmānuja who, similarly loving beauty, found that
: beauty of Śrī Ranganātha's eyes was infinitely greater
ın those of his spouse to which he was deeply attached.

He was considered to be the Bow of the celestial
dhead or its incarnation. Tamil scholars fix his period
the 8th Century. It is stated that he was instrumental
the construction of the Śrīrangam temple with its
'enfold towers and prākārams (outer walls).

Tirumangai has written many compositions. His major work is that which comprises his hymns of the several shrines all over South India. He was widely travelled and spread the Āḻvār literature in all the Śrī Vaiṣṇava temples. His Hymnal collection comprises the *Periya* (Big) *Tirumoḻi*. There are compositions called *madals*, big and small; *dandakas* (staff); *tiru-veḻukurri-rukkai* (surrender); which reveal his mastery of the ancient styles of composition. The ancients, it may be recalled, had the discipline of both experience and expression in all that they did.

TIRUVELUKURRIRUKKAI

Once Thou created Brahma resident in Thy navel, primeval, vast, situate on the petals of Thy navel-lotus. And the Two lights (thereafter).

Once Thou destroyed the terrible triple-fortressed Lanka with Thine fire-tongued arrows discharged from Thy incomparable bow carved with ivory at both ends.

Once Thou didst ask for three foot-lengths of the earth measured by Thee, wearing the three-plaited sacred thread on thine resplendent chest as a Brahmin, (and) unequalled, Thou didst measure with Thy two feet the three worlds.

Once, whilst all the quarters trembled, Thou mounted the beautiful-plumaged bird (Garuḍa) and destroyed the great grief of the helpless elephant, with its hanging (helpless) trunk exuding threefold juices, and two ears, caught in the lake, deep and full of water (by the crocodile by slaying it).

In Thee the Brahmins, who keep the three fires, the four *Vedas*, the five sacrifices and six works, seek refuge:[1]

1. The three fires are dakṣiṇāgni, āhavanāgni and gārhapatyāgni. The four *Vedas* are *Ṛg*, *Yajus*, *Sāma* and *Athar-*

Thou hast a nature knowable only to the *yogis* who
e withdrawn their sense-organs within their bodies
. destroyed the four (hunger, sleep, fear and sex) and
e established themselves in the One (Goal Thyself),
ing renounced the two (dualities of passion and dark-
s) and by that practice have destroyed births caused
twofold (good and bad) actions.

Thou hast a nature wonderful and impossible to be
wn by the three-eyed (Rudra), four-armed, in whose
ted hair the five-mouthed serpent and Ganga are tied

Thou hast lifted up the seven worlds with thine
ks.

Thou hast been the granter of the sixfold ecstasies
ken of (by the scriptures).

Thou hast in Thine beautiful hands the five shining
apons;

O Lord who have four adorable hands and art of the
our of the Ocean (deep blue), Thou art wrapt in *Yoga*-
p, whilst with one-pointed mind the clear moon-faced
rnally youthful two spouses (Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi)
oying Thee are all the time massaging Thine two feet
h their exquisite flower-like hands.

Thou hast established the four (castes) (directions)
l art the five elements (ether, air, fire, water and
th).

Thou hast slain the seven bulls for the sake of the
y whose hair is buzzing with six-limbed bees.

Thou art impossible to be comprehended by those
o follow the six systems.

Thou keepest (on Thine chest) the lady whose hair

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vaṇa. The five sacrifices are *deva, pitṛ, bhūta, Mānāva,* and *Brahma.* The six works are *yajanam, yājanam adhyayanam, adhyāpanam, dānam* and *pratigrahaṇam.*

has five qualities (softness, coolness, fragrance, length and blackness).

Thou grantest the four (*dharma, artha, kāma, mokṣa*); (Thou) art the three forms, *para, vyūha, vibhava*).[1] Thou grantest the twofold fruits (*ihāmuṣmika*).[2] Being One Thou pervadest all.

O Transcendent Person, Who art in *Yoga*-sleep on the serpent waving its hoods to the chants of the Brahmins at Tirukkuḍantai, where flows the Ponni (Kāveri) amid places of exuberent gardens, with flowers overflowing with honey and excellent foliage; where are groves which have invaluable gems and where good grains and paddy grow, where are golden houses with flags aloft as it were hindering the movement of the moon in the sky, fully wealthy! May the sorrows which happen to me depart from me.

EROS OR THE MADALS

Tirumangai, like the great Śathakopa (Nammāḻvār), was a master of the spiritual art of divine love. The poetic seers or metaphysicians clearly laid down certain fundamental modes of approach to Divine Experience. They called these modes as *rasas*. The direct meaning of this significant word is that it is the essence (*sāra*) of an experience. It is that which is felt or tasted as the essence of experience of a particular kind. Indeed *rasa* has been later applied to literature as poetic taste or sentiment. The metaphor is clear throughout. *Rasa* is said to be the quality of water or *ap* in the ancient physics of Sām-

1. Some commentators speak of the three forms as Brahma, Viṣṇu, Śiva; some others that it refers to Samkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. But it is better to take it to refer to the *Vyūha, Vibhava and Arca.*
2. The commentator speaks about good and bad but it seems to be wrong.

:ya and Vedānta and other systems. This quality is :o the quality of that which moves or attains a partilar end. The quality of dynamic movement in the enyment of taste or essence is thus coupled with the quay of taste as excellence. Bad taste, too, exists, and e know that in taste we have to recognize both the bad .d the good. Spiritual taste is of a different order. ome consider that it is *Ānanda* or Bliss (*Ānanda Rasa*). :ahman has been described as *Rasa* at some places and *Ānanda*[1] at others. Are these to be considered to be ıe and the same? *Rasa* here could only mean the Ultiate Essence and *Ānanda* would mean that its experiıce as Essence Ultimate is itself Bliss that is beyond l the pleasures and pains, ecstasies and so on.

Ānanda is an objective-subjective experience because sa is what is objectively realised as the essence whilst *nanda* is closely linked up with *rasa* as part of its atinment. *Ānanda* is the attainment achieved by *rasa* as strument or *karaṇa* of realising taste or essence. Beauty *Sundara*) is thus a complex totality of union between ıe means (*rasa*) to attain essence and the attainment : it (*ānanda*) which is purest ultimate experience of this nion or completion of attainment. It is a dual or a .une concept in which unity is definitely the major or ominant fact.

Aesthetic philosophers by induction of human behaour have stated that sentiment or *rasa* can flow in nine ays towards attainment. They are said to be *Rati* (conıgal love), *Hāsya* (jocularity or fun), *Śoka* (grief), *Kroha* (anger), *Utsāha* (enthusiasm), *Bhaya* (fear), *Jugupsa* aversion), *Vismaya* (wonder, confusion) and *Śānta* peace). These *rasas* are in fact linked up with each

1. *Raso vai sah; Ānandam Brahmeti vyajānāt.*

other and in certain situations it is just possible that all will combine in various degrees to produce these emotions or sentiments (sentiment being distinguished from the former by its more permanent configuration). But poets have sometimes made one of these dominant and the others servient. If we consider that the great poets or hymnists tried to adore the one being in all their parts and for this purpose yoked these sentiments towards the realization (and sublimation) of these sentiments in the direction of Divine Experience, then it is a basic transformative or alchemic function that they have tried to perform. Each one of these *rasas* (as means) is directed towards divine enjoyment and thus out of these ways the transcendence over the lower form of these sentiments is got. Sublimation is thus rendered possible by *rasa* as means only when it is capable of being linked up with the Ultimate Object or Reality. In this case it is God. The impersonal Godhead also can be known and entered into through the *Adbhuta* (wonder-sentiment); more truly it is experienced through the Personal Deity known also as the essence of the Impersonal or the Transcendent. The Āḻvārs showed the way to this sublimation process. All art need not be of this nature. Indeed ordinary dramatic art hardly develops the power to transform human nature into the divine. It has sunk into mere enjoyment without elevation, even in the very best types of production such as drama or poetry or sculpture. Degenerate art humanises and naturalises the sentiments whereas the spiritual alchemical art divinises and exalts the same by its devotion to the Highest Reality and the Ultimate Reality. Thus it is that *rasa* becomes the instrument for search for the Ultimate Reality consciously chosen and pursued with all one's being and in all one's parts. It is

act of total or integral surrender to the Ultimate, erein man becomes a river (*saras*) seeking its ocean, *apah* seeking its destination which is above, through ng heated into a cloud and lifted up to its source.

Tirumangai in his first work (*Tiruvelukurrirukkai*) s performed his surrender or dedication to serve God ne, to seek Him alone. This surrender itself gave ce to joy or rather yielded joy. In the small *Madal iriya-tiru-madal*) he expresses this sentiment of de-ndence. *Madals* are not merely compositions written a particular metre (*kali-vemba*). So far as the Āḻvār concerned they express a particular significant idea. cient poets or hymnists never composed anything in y metre or in any *rāga* (melody or tune) unless it ex-essed the sentiment fully. The sentiment in the *madal* love, an ardent love that lays bare its whole heart to e beloved who does not heed and indeed turns a deaf r and which thus takes the lover to the final tragic t of self-immolation. It is an open declaration that, thout the object of love being attained, one's life is not rthwhile. The *madal* is a special act committed by a ver who has met or seen her (his) beloved object just r a moment even as in a dream, and for whose attain-ent he pines away in silent grief at first. Finally, un-le to contain her (or his) secret love without posses-n of her (or his) object adorable, she (or he) openly clarés her (or his) allegiance and love to that person public. The act itself consists in a public declaration at she (or he) cannot live without that object and secon-y by the act of suicide (*sati*). In *Ilakkaṇa vilakkam* (857) is stated that *madal* is that act "in which a man who is beheld an unknown woman in a dream vows to pos-ss her in reality or to die by riding a palmyra stem"

(Tamil Lexicon under *ulamadal*). The madal itself is an act of suicide committed by two separated lovers due to intensity of feeling of the intolerance of separation. The *Tirukkural* (ch. 114) describes this thus: "To those who are torn from their beloved one and suffer from the pangs of their passion, there is no better recourse left but the riding of the palmyra stalk. Body and soul cannot support this anguish and they have consented to ride the palm: they have trampled down all shame. Firmness and delicacy I had formerly; but now I possess only the stalk of the palmyra tree that is ridden by the lovelorn lover" (*V.V.S. Aiyer's translation*).

The *Tolkāppiyam* also mentions *madal* as a horse made of palmyra (*Poru.* 51, *Madal ma*). *Kuruntokai** says, "Mad lovers will ride upon the palmyra stem *as if* on a horse." Thus the palmyra stem is the instrument used for riding to death, so to speak.

* "The (mad) lovers will ride upon the palmyra stem as if on a horse: adorn themselves with bud-bunches of Calotropia flowers: are drawn across the street in uproar: undergo other tortures even when the live intensifies." (Trans. Sri T.P. Palaniappa Pillai, Reader in Tamil of the S. V. Oriental Institute, 1942-52).

The custom of *madal* practice has become an annual function as it were in the country as a social custom for love lunatics. The annual *Vaiśākh* festival at Tirupati known as *Gangā-jatra* is an enactment of suicide motif of the love of one Asura for Ganga the Goddess, who is recognized to be a goddess like Kāli seeking blood sacrifices. Well may it be that all sacrifice originated in this love-sacrifice that is bloody too. A description of the drama enacted in public and participated in by the low class country folk will reveal clearly the *madal* motif. On the first day the lover is said to wear the disguise of a renouncer of all (*vairāgi*), smearing ashes and wailing loudly for her. The obscene language is full of shamelessness of love—verging on madness—sexual, amorous and yet renouncing all else but this love for Ganga. The second and third are not so very important but the fourth day the lover disguises himself as really sexy, with all the adornments of vulgar flowers and red powder answering to the description of *Kuruntokai*. The *madal* actually happens on the last day as the Asura commits suicide. Then the goddess relents.

The *Kural* describes *madal* in the section on Love (*kādal*). The male says: "I put my trust on the raft that was built of firmness and delicacy, but the rushing stream of passion hath carried it along its course. The fair one weareth tiny bracelets and is tender as a flower. It is she that hath given me the palmstalk and anguish of eventide. My eyes cannot sleep for thinking of that artless one; I shall ride the palm-stalk even when the passion of her heart is deep as the ocean." The female says: "My passion considereth not the strength of my modesty nor my kindness towards him and betrayeth my secret by showing itself abroad. My passion seeth that none taketh notice of it; and it wandereth about in the streets in great anguish. Fools laugh at me to my very face; for they have felt not all the pangs that I feel."

Whatever may be the effective means by which the *madal* performance brings about the result of union between the lover and the beloved through the intercession of the public, it was dramatized later on.

Tirumangai in his *Periya Madal* mentions that it is not customary for South Indian females to practise this *madal* (obviously in the South the male was practising this *madal*) but that it was customary for the North Indian women to practise this *madal*. He instances the case of Vāsavadatta* (of *Kathāsaritasāgara*). Śrī Sītā of the Rāmāyaṇa who followed her husband out of love,

* *Śiriya Tirumadal*, 64-77 gives a reference to Vāsavadatta who, in Kathasaritsagara, mentions her love for Udayana of the Vatsas in his captivity at her father's house. It is explained thus: "will those who are full of love heed the slanderous talk? This being so, that girl known as Vāsavadatta is not some mere girl (she belongs to a noble Rajput family). That well-jacketed beautiful-breasted Vāsava indeed is praised by all. She went with the chained Kālan (Vatsarāj) of broad shoulders in the festooned streets abandoning her numerous maids. Was she criticised for that?" (*STM*, 64-67).

Vegavati, Ulūpi who kidnapped Arjuna and married him in Nāgaland, Uṣā who dreamt of Aniruddha (grandson of Śrī Kṛṣṇa) and had him carried away into her own apartments and Umā who sacrificed herself for love and was known as Sati (one who performed *madal* for love of her husband) (*Periya Madal*, 46-78).

The two qualities of *rakṣakatva* (ability to protect) and *saulabhya* (accessibility) of God are more important in the religious sense than the Omnipotence of God even or His All-creatorship. The *madal* is, on the one hand, a frantic appeal to God to come down from His transcendental Kingdom and Height to accept the purest flower of love-offering (*kāmapuṣpa*) even though the love is coming from a being unfitted in every sense to receive such a Grace; and, on the other hand, it is what the individual soul cannot but do. Yet in a third sense it is the final act of upthrowing of all *māna dambha* (self-valuation and gaudiness), etc., which are stated

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Kālan as an epithet of Vatsarāja strongly remind the Āḻvār of himself who was named *Para-Kālan*. The *Śiriya Tirumadal* is the earlier composition of the two *madals*.

Madal is mentioned in the *Rg Veda* X.95.14 as practised by Purūravas against Urvaśi who pleads with him not to do so. cf. *Sat. Brah.* XI.5.1.6-9.

Vegavatī is mentioned in *Kathāsaritsāgara* (Trans. Tawney, VIII. p. 24ff.

Ulūpi or Ulici episode is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, Ar. 234-18 Cri. Ed. 206.29).

Uṣā's story is given in the *Varāha Purāṇa* (cf. *Hn. B. Ādi* 206.29 & *Aśvamedha* 74-78).

The story of Nala-Damayanti also gives an exposition of this *madal* dharma: *Mh.B. Āran.* 53.4b (cr. Ed.), Viṣam agnim jalam rajjum āsthāsye tava kāraṇāt.

Thus Tirumangai affirms that the Northern practice is how the woman, in order to uphold *pātivratya* or her own existence, is prepared to commit suicide (*sati*) in some way. In the South the male alone usually did the same, and on a palmyra stalk by convention. Convention removes the naturalness of the love and as in the *Gangā-jātra* it becomes a dramatization of a myth rather than a real epochal transformation of true tragic sentiment of real existence and value

to be *asambhūti*, death, in so far as they interfere with the attainment of God.

Another explanation which is perhaps plausible is that the act of *madal* is a kind of non-violent resistance, to use the modern Gandhian expression, *satyāgraha*, which, be it noted, is an open declaration of the inward right to be accepted by God, which makes the unrelenting beloved scandalised for heartlessness and this forces him or inwardly melts his heart and makes him accept the pure love. But this method is by all hands held to be an extreme step.

It may be asked whether Tirumangai Āḻvār was prepared to put an end to his existence in his efforts to attain the Lord or whether he was only offering a threat to God challenging Him to prove His claim to be the Truth of Truths, or whether the Āḻvār was merely dramatizing the acute psychosis set up by his *faith* in *śaraṇāgati*. It is likely that we should take the last alternative to be nearer the truth than either the first or the second. Indeed, if the story of the Āḻvār prior to his conversion is to be considered in this context, it is clear that he had loved his beloved deeply and wholly. He was prepared to do everything for the sake of the object of his adoration. Not to have loved at all is one of the things that he could not do. In the *madal* he transfers his affection from his dearly loved wife who had been his teacher too to the Lord Nārāyaṇa. The result is an intolerable experience of distance and separation.

The *madal* can be considered to be the stage of utter collapse of hope of gaining the beloved. It is comparable to *kārpaṇya*, prostration, which is the sixth limb in *Śaraṇāgati*, self-surrender. It is that state in which love is most all-absorbing and the only refuge. It is the state of ut-

ter grief and helplessness waiting on the grace of God or rather His infinite compassion. It awakens the inner feelings of spiritual need, seeking God's mercy and grace. It is difficult to consider that the public display or ostentatious show of riding on the palmyra stalk or horse, has been customary, though it is not unlikely that such a custom should have been practised by the lower strata of the community in order to draw attention of the public to intervene before it is too late. At least it is clear that when Tirumangai Āḻvār states he would do so and has perhaps done it, it must have been something prevalent in the country (8th Century A.D.). Of course this was done in the sublimated way, the beloved being not any human male or female but God Himself. There is the other myth motif of considering every soul as a female in respect of God and God as the Only Male. This *madal* is therefore utilised in a spiritual way for a spiritual goal, and as an anga (limb) of *śaraṇāgati* (self-surrender) to express extreme prostration and abasement and helplessness. In this context of the custom it can be considered to be a myth or a symbol. The spiritual madness or deepest absorption finds expression in this overt performance. Undoubtedly Tirumangai's state of divine love is madder than that of Āṇḍāl or Śathakopa or Kulaśekhara who rolled on the floor of the temple and demonstrated his love and devotion.

The *madal* however is a threat to God, for its intention seems to be to show to the world that God is not the *śaraṇāgata-rakṣaka*, the saviour of the refugee, nor is He *sulabha*, easily accessible, a threat which is fortunately never treated by God as not worth taking notice of. God's assurance to the soul that loves Him alone and to whom the soul has totally dedicated itself, is of greatest

spiritual value to the soul, and it is on this truth of God's Word that the *madal* revolves. The assurances are contained in the *Bhagavad Gita* verse (XVIII. 66) *Sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekam śaranam vraja*: "Renouncing all dharmas seek refugee in Me alone."

The general motif behind the practice of the *madal* has been given. Tirumangai Āḻvār has written two *madals*, bigger and smaller.

A brief summary of the *Periya Tirumadal* is here given.

1. The ends (goals) declared by the Vedas which were revealed to sages by the Supreme Deity, are *dharma* (obligation), *artha* (wealth and power), *kāma* (desire or love) and *mokṣa* (liberation from the cycle of births and deaths) (*aram, porul, inbam, vīdu*). These are goals praised by all in the world.

2. Among these four the last one, *mokṣa* (*vīdu*) states the goal to be attained after death. To attain this goal after death (*pretya*), men torture their bodies and practise all kinds of austerity. But we do not hear when and who attained this liberation (*vīdu*). Nor have those who have attained this liberation come back to us and told us about their attainment.

3. We have to accept however that there is liberation (*mokṣa*) if we practise the obligations and austerities on the authority of the scriptures. Even so, says the Āḻvār, "Tell me of that person who went to that beginningless unattainable haven which is said to be liberation, passing through the small door in the middle of the solar orb (*Sūryamaṇḍala*).

4. The *dharmas* (*yajñas*) grant celestial pleasures which are not enduring pleasures. These pleasures of heaven (*svarga*) are results of cruelty to animals, espe-

cially the *kāmeṣṭis* (sacrifices done to get fulfilment of one's pleasures or desires). Thus *dharma* also involves cruelty even as mokṣa involves cruelty to one's own body. After the merit acquired by the performance of *dharma* is exhausted, one returns to this world. So the results of *dharma* are unenduring.

5. In the mortal world power and wealth ebb away much sooner than the merit that gets exhausted in *svarga.* So the pursuit of material wealth and power is fraught with misery and sorrow.

6. So love alone remains as the one single goal of man. It is the basic *puruṣārtha* which we can pursue for its own sake. It is its own reward. The call of divine love is at once most satisfying and permanent. Kāma is therefore chosen as the goal *par excellence.* The Āḻvār exclaims:

> "The materialists are those who have not melted at the melody of the flute of Kṛṣṇa. They are those who have not broken into ecstasy on hearing the bells of the fascinating bulls! They are those who, on hearing the tender call issuing from birds on the palm tree, do not think of their beloveds. They are those whose bodies do not get burnt up in the fire of the moon's clear rays in the sky. They are those who do not walk love-sick in the beautiful streets when powerful Cupid discharged flower arrows from his bow. They may be excellent girls and dames who sleep comfortably on the flower-spread beds and with fresh flowers on their heads. But they have never felt the pangs of love. For true womanhood consists in loving with one's entire being. We have heard of the maxim that woman should

not have recourse to *madal*. But ladies, high and fair, of swan-gait and deer-looks, tender and timid, too, have for the sake of their beloveds, had recourse to performing *madal* when unreciprocated. This is of course not the Southern view: but we in this will follow the Northern view and practice.[1] Those who do not accept it are those who do not know the inexpressible fragrance of the sandal flowers in bloom on the mountains of the Southern kingdom."

The Āḻvār describes the instances of Umā, Sīta, Vegavatī, Ulūpī, Uṣā and Vāsavadatta who trod the path of public declaration of their love to their beloveds and were prepared to commit suicide rather than continue to live.

The smaller *madal* follows the same pattern.

Tirumangai has shown in these two sublime works the psychology of *kāma* (love) as involving a martyr-principle, love unto death. Real love is always a love unto death, for it is such a death that grants immortality or conquest over death, *vināśena mṛtyum tīrtvā sambhūtyāmṛtam aśnute:* by death one crosses over mortality and by birth one attains the immortal, as the *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad* puts it.

Total surrender having been performed, the *madal* or the vow of love unto death having been taken, the Āḻvār takes up the staff of God. God is the staff of love. The central truth sung in his *daṇḍaka* is this much alone. A *daṇḍaka* is a small staff used by mountaineers as a help in the ascent. The Divine Lord is a veritable staff, de-

1. In the South, the male alone was permitted to have recourse to practice of *madal*—declare publicly his love for the girl who does not reciprocate it and commit suicide. But in the North females also were permitted to do *madal*.

pendable and necessary. Love matures into dependence and all things are rendered possible.

Tirumangai opines in his *Tirukkurun-daṇḍakam* thus:

> I, who am His slave, cannot leave Him. He is the treasure, likened to a pillar of coral. He is the gradually attainable goal of all those that remember Him. He put an end to Kamsa's life. He is the ruler of the Universe. He remembers His devotees. Loving me He has come and entered my mind so that it could humble itself and praise Him. I seek one thing alone. When I saw in dream the Lord of dark-blue colour, who in His boar-form carried the Earth, coming to me and consumed my mind, speech, acts and faith, exceedingly I became one who had lost all attraction to other things."

God is the very embodiment of love and love to Him is the ultimate goal of man. The language of love is something that comes from one's depths, inspired by a total self-giving to the contemplation of all the attributes and activities of the beloved one.

One's language of love is unlearnt. Its supreme language is continuous rededication to God in all ways. *Jñāna, karma* and *bhakti* fuse themselves through love.

> "I shall praise Thee alone who art spoken of as the unfailing wealth and supreme light."

God Himself instigates this spontaneous flow of love.

> "When I, who am in a dirty body, became sinful by praising others, my tongue became foul: then, the supreme Lord residing in Śrīranga, out of love spoke to me the Eternal Name, and

displayed kindness. Coming to my place, He appeared within my vision."

God is spontaneous love and grace. His love and grace are not products or results of the individual efforts. Even like the other Āḻvārs, Tirumangai says:

"Having seen Him unceasingly, my eyes refuse to see anything else!"

God's love had been a supreme staff to him, and so to all the mystics who had loved Him alone. God bestows everything, faith, vision and beatitude and surely all the other goals of man too.

CHAPTER VII

VIṢṆU-CITTA

(Periyāḻvār)

Viṣṇucitta was a Brahmin belonging to Śrīvilliputtūr. He was doing service of supplying garlands which he had made from flowers in his garden to the Deity in the temple there. This happens to have been the well-known service which Brahmins used to undertake in addition to teaching those who came for sacred knowledge. It is well known also that though Viṣṇucitta was a very good man and ordinarily read he hardly had done his *Veda* and was not a scholar. His deep devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa was well known to all and he had obviously mystic experiences of deepest intimacy. He was constantly enjoying the Divine Bliss and has sung the wonderful Tirumoḻi known as *Periyāḻvār Tirumoḻi*. It is on the lines of the Tirumoḻis of other Āḻvārs. However, in this work, the Āḻvār enjoys singing about the experiences he had when he assumed the role of the parents of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and associates of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and lived the life of those people. This of course is the meditation through dramatization. The greatness of these hymns of dramatization lies in the exquisite discoveries of the greatest psychological depth and interest when one begins to develop tensions and poises and calms and storms which illuminate the entire relation between God and man and incidentally awakens the awareness of the Reality both in its individual depths and universal vastnesses.

He had also sung the daily song of prayer to God to awaken in the morning when the universal hosts of gods and men and all are waiting to worship Him.

It is stated that the most important occasion in the life of Viṣṇucitta was when he was called upon to visit the court of one Vallabhadeva to secure the prize offered by him to expound the *Veda*. Though he shrank from this very difficult task he was commanded by God (obviously in a dream) to go and claim the prize. His diffidence was very great because he did not learn the *Veda* from anybody. However the miracle happened and he was able to recite and expound the *Veda* most brilliantly. Therefore the title given by his devotees to him was "He who knew the *Veda* without being taught by any one except directly by God."

It is stated he got the entire *Veda* by this miraculous grace of God as a gift. He was taken round the streets of the capital of the Pandyan ruler Vallabhadeva and, when he was so taken round on a royal elephant, he beheld the vision of Lord Nārāyaṇa on His celestial vehicle Garuḍa. It was then, it seems, he burst out into the hymn of "Long live the divine god," whose translation is given below. He is the only Āḻvār who has sung this kind of song and this song is now being daily recited in all the temples. He asked for nothing for Himself but for God and God's sovereignty over the entire Universe.

Viṣṇucitta is also known for his extraordinary love of God and God's love for him; he was not only taught the Veda in its entirety without having gone through the course of training fixed for it, he was given a divine child who became Godā and Āṇḍāl (sovereign of the Heart of God), who married the Godhead.

TIRUPPALLĀNDU (Blessed many Years)

1. For many years and everlasting years and many thousands of years and crores of hundreds of thousands

of years let Thine red feet's beauty be protected! O Lord of emerald-blue hue Who have shoulders that vanquished the wrestlers!

2. Let Thou along with ourselves Thine inseparable servants live for everlasting years! Let Her (Śrī) adorning Thee as ornament residing on Thine right chest, live for everlasting years! Let the luminous blazing sharp disc in Thine right hand which is capable of annihilating foes be preserved for everlasting years. Let Thine conch (*Pāncajanya*) whose sound pierces through the clanging din of weapons in battle be preserved for everlasting years.

3. O Ye who are fit to do service and are ready, come and carry the mud and fragrance (for God's worship). We will not admit onto our fold those who serve others (kings and employers) for food. For in seven births we have not been serving any other. We have sung eternal years to Him (Rāma) who in battle utterly destroyed Lanka, the seat of the rākṣasas.

4. Come Ye and join us, giving up desire for everything else, before being lost in the world of sorrow, those who are having a mind to come and join us. Come with a mind to chant with devotion "Namo Nārāyaṇāya" (Surrender to Nārāyaṇa) so that the countryside and town may know. Sing Ye eternal life to God.

1. The episode refers to the early life of Kṛṣṇa who overpowered wrestlers of the court of Kamsa. Physically power is not less in God. God is both spiritual and physical might.
2. Man should seek long life for his benefactors under whose Shadow one hopes to live. Man is inseparable from God, his Master and Creator, and the welfare of God includes and implies the welfare of man. *Śrī* also must be for ever as she is to grant like the real mother the benefits of the celestial grace. So too the weapons of *cakra* and *śanku* (disc and conch,) symbolic of power and knowledge.
3-4. The first two verses are prayed for the long life of God, as also His divine partner (*divyadampatī*) Śrī, the Mother of

5. O Ye who belong to the community that serves the Lord Master of the senses (Hṛīśīkeśa), who is the Ruler of all the worlds, who uprooted the whole host of the Asuras, come and touching His feet utter His (occult) names, abandoning the old grooves and giving up all sense of I and Mine, sing "Let there be thousands of years of life (for God)."

6. Myself, my father, his father and his father and grandfather, for seven generations are doing all services continuously, to Him Who in the hour (star of) Tiruvoṇam (Śravanam), when the Asuras are strong, slew the foe, in the form of Man-lion, and we shall sing to our hearts' content, "Eternal life for thousand years to God!"

7. All our families have to serve Thee who art the abode of the Disc that has red luminosity brighter than that of the Celestial lights. Long life eternal do we sing to Thee who art the master who ordered that Disc to

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celestial Grace and mercy, and other weapon of God. Man is called upon to live in the celestial universe of God. The third and fourth verses lay down one condition, the exclusive devotion to God (*ekāntabhakti*) and it seems it also includes the continuous hereditary service of God through births. The sixth verse also intimates this continuity of service in the family. Renunciation means renunciation of every other service except His service.

It is clear that some may understand the eternal years prayed for God, are for the incarnate divine as *Arca* which had become the centre of culture and security for all people in every village and town. The whole civilization and culture of the South Indian seers had its hub in the temple Icon, and any injury or accident to it meant the disruption of the entire community and the world. The protection of the Icon, and the performance of duties by each without fault were the two conditions of God's presence itself in the Icon. Therefore the Āḻvār prays for eternal years of residence on earth. This will reveal the supreme importance of singing eternal years, praying to Him to be with man and His aspiring disinterested devotees in all His five forms, transcendent, cosmic, historical, iconic and Internal Ruler Immortal.

7. Bāṇa was made his own grandson's father-in-law.

cut asunder the thousand shoulders of Bāṇa, that master of an army capable of wonder warfare, such that blood flowed out of them.

8. I sing everlasting years to Thee who grantest me excellent ghee-mixed food, unceasing service, betel-nuts filling my hands, flower garland to adorn my neck, earrings for mine ears, sandal-paste for my body, and who art capable of making me pure, and who have the foe of hooded serpents for thine ensign (Garuḍa).

9. Wearing the cloth which Thou hast worn and discarded, taking the food remaining after Thou hast eaten, wearing the garland of *tulasi* that has adorned Thee and given to me, thus do we, Thine feet-worshippers, performing assiduously the tasks allotted to us in whichever directions, sing eternal years to Thee who art lying on the luminous serpent, during the period of Tiruvoṇam.

10. On the day when, O Lord, we were connected with the word *(mantra)* that made us Thine slaves (inseparable from Thee), then itself there resulted to us Thine slaves renunciation of all attachments.

To Thee do I sing eternal years, who wast born on an auspicious day in Mathura, and who broke the bow and danced on the head of the five-hooded serpent fierce.

11. Like Śelva-nambi, faultless, ruler of the people of jewels, like Kottiyur, a hill of pride and lord of wealth, am I Thine eternal salve. Uttering correctly "Surrender

8-9. In the temple the *prasādams* given to all and to servants specially are being enumerated. These *prasādams* are all remnants of offerings to God. Man gets everything for his living from God. This was systematized in the temple organization in a wonderful way. Man must receive all from God after having been used by Him. *Bh. Gita,* III. 13.

10. The mantra is *Praṇava* with the *mūla mantra* stated as Namo Nārāyaṇāya. This cuts asunder all attachment to the world at and from the time of initiation by the teacher. Oṇam (Tiruvoṇam) is the most important festival, when Bali was conquered and redeemed.

to Nārāyaṇa" and pronouncing Thine many names, O God, who art pure in myriad respects, I shall sing to Thee eternal years, eternal years.

Viṣṇucitta became unique because he was so thoroughly devoted to divine living, seeking naught else. To live for God, to love God purely, leads to unmixed bliss here and every where, in life as in death which is the passage to greater living; one just lives in God for God in all His magnificent worlds. Where God is, there is Bliss and immortality: death is where God has departed. It is not death to go out of one's transient frame and gain another frame or work up another organism according to one's deserts *(karma):* death is but a rebirth for many and it is a vast opening to higher worlds to see God supersensorily, where God in His higher infinity reveals the glory that is infinite and unending. However, Visnucitta sees that, though it may be good for the individual to pass to higher worlds, for the world here itself it means nothing. It is not that if man lives here continuously he can redeem the world. It is not enough if even the great *Ācāryas* (the teachers of wisdom) and Ṛṣis live on this planet of ours to transform the world and maintain the *dharma* that is yearning to be fixed here but which passes, thanks to the perpetual cycle of time known as the fourfold yugas, *Kṛta, Treta, Dvāpara* and *Kali.* This temporal character of all time has only one chance of being made impossible and that is to infect it with Divine presence. *Adharma* cannot be arrested by talk, discussion and even by partial revolutions, but only by the Divine descent constantly and continuously being maintained. This is the Concept of Arcā (illuminating presence) that is also the redeeming presence which makes three things possible, the saving of

the saints *(sādhus)*, the destruction of evil and evil-doers *(duṣkṛta)* and the re-establishment of the Absolute *dharma* or the *divinised yuga dharma.* And it is the merit of Visnucitta and his great good fortune to have had a daughter worthy of himself who made it her main business to seek God for husband (as woman), to awaken Him to His solemn duty *(dharma* of re-establishment of *dharma* in the world into which He has incarnated), and to have so closely united with Him through life, through eternity, in all planes of the Divine Being.

CHAPTER VIII

GODĀ

(Āṇḍāl)

Godā is well-known as the only woman Āḻvār of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism.* She is said to be a foundling daughter of Viṣṇucitta. She was brought up by him in the orthodox fashion. Godā quite in the Bhāgavata manner began to worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the beloved. She sought the love of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and wished to be married to him alone.

As Godā grew up, her devotion also deepened, and all those who saw her were won over by her spiritual beauty. Her powers of poetic imagination seem to have attracted her foster-father who helped her to make them divine. Godā composed two major works, namely, *Tiruppāvāi*** and *Nācciyār Tirumoli*. The former is of rare beauty, revealing the preparations for gaining Śrī Kṛṣṇa as husband, and the latter is a composition reflecting her mind, when she imagines and dreams of her marriage with him.

Tiruppāvāi is called so because of the refrain at the end of each one of the thirty hymns. This refrain is usually interpreted as calling the help of the Divine Mother Kātyāyani for whom this *vrata* or observance is made for securing one's adorable person as husband.

These hymns are sung in the month of *Mārgaśirṣa*,† a month most sacred for an observance. Young unmarried

* Godā is also known as Āṇḍāl. Godā means giver of cows, of light, illuminations, and revelations. This is an ancient name of Śrīdevi. Godā is said to be an incarnation of her or Bhūdevi.

** Tiruppāvāi has been translated into English by several persons.

† *Mārgaśirṣa* is said to be the most beloved of Śrī Kṛṣṇa *māsānām mārgaśirṣo'ham*. *Brāhmī-muhūrta* of the year is said to be this month.

girls get up early in the morning, go to the tank or stream for bath, and then proceed to the temple for worship in the shrine, singing these hymns. It is not known whether this practice was followed earlier. Undoubtedly Godā's following the path of the *Bhāgavata* created a tradition in South Indian Vaiṣṇava temples.

This *vrata* or observance helped to divinize her love, sublimated her love-hunger into one of soul-hunger and brought into being a new spiritual force in the life of young women and devotees.

A brief analysis of *Tiruppāvāi* is necessary in order to point out the mystic importance of Godā's psychological understanding of love.

The setting of the poem is not original. Godā merely utilizes the story of the *Bhāgavata* where Vraja girls are stated to have made vows to Durgā Kātyayānī so as to gain good husbands and love. The aim of the vow is to derive pleasure in the sight of the beloved, delight in his proximity, and ineffable happiness in union with him. The sublime nature of Godā's love lies in its substituting in place of the ordinary human beloved the Divine Beloved, who has been described as the Most Beloved or the Beloved of the beloved, God. God is the true Beloved, whom all must choose ultimately. In this case, He is chosen as *pati* (husband or Lord). The Divine Lord is the real Lord, husband (*pati*) of all souls, for all ultimately depend on Him alone.

The vow of Godā is therefore the observance of an ancient custom among youthful maidens, giving it a new orientation. The substitution of God leads to the transformation of the entire psychic attitude, and also to divine mystic union, which is deemed to be ultimate liberation (mokṣa). Union with God is the true aim of the soul

yearning for freedom, infinity, perfection and unmixed bliss or freedom from all cycles of births and disease and misery. God is all these in abundant measure and is infinite in every respect.

The first five hymns of the Tiruppāvāi lay down the conditions that facilitate the attainment of the divine presence. The Lord is attainable only by one who is devoted to bodily and mental purity, and has one-pointedness of mind, i.e. one who has bound one's consciousness to the attainment of the end.

The second group of hymns deals with the conditions which should precede the utter surrender to the Beloved. Godā enumerates the different kinds of seekers—a typological study, so to speak—that yearn in different ways and measures for the Divine. All seekers are addressed as girls, as virgins. Indeed she invites all to accompany her to the shrine, promising them a richer and fuller experience of God. The husband-hood of God is considered to be the most significant to a girl, as it entails a total dependence and fulfilment of oneself in and through God. This is the essence of bridal mysticism.

In introducing this mystic-classic of bridal mysticism, Parāśarabhatta, the great Ācārya of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism, praises Godā as the wonderful lady who, by her flower-garland already worn by her, forcibly awakened Kṛṣṇa, sleeping on the dark lady (Nīlādevi), and taught him the transcendent truth of his own being, as mentioned in innumerable scriptures.

This introduction is usually held to state that it describes the attempt of Godā to win God for herself from Nīlādevi. Nīlādevi is considered in Śrī Vaiṣṇva theology to be the third form or personality of the Divine Mother, whose two other forms are Bhūdevī and Śrīdevī. She is

described as having the special function of hiding the sins of all souls (mainly devotees) so as to prevent the wrath of God from falling on them and consuming them. This she does by making Him enraptured by her divine beauty —the beauty of mercy (*dayā*).

Godā awakens Kṛṣṇa to his duty or *dharma*. The *avatāra* descends or takes birth on the earth for three purposes as the *Bhagavad Gita* declares: (i) for the protection of the *sādhus* or good men following *dharma*, (ii) for the destruction of the evil-doers and (iii) for the restoration of *dharma* and faith in it. This happens whenever *dharma* declines and *adharma* rears up its head. But the mercy of God overpowers Him and makes Him unmindful of His great aim and purpose in incarnating. It is out of this sleep of *dayā* that Godā awakens the incarnate God. As such hers is more a call to God to awaken from His stupor than a call to the damsels to attain Him as the Beloved. Godā's remarkable achievement shows that her becoming the spouse or bride of God is not for seeking forgiveness of the sins of mankind or of the wicked ones who have made this earth heavy with misery and have themselves become a heavy burden on the earth, but for lightening the burden of the earth by putting down evil *(adharma)* and evil-doers *(duṣkṛts)*, and for bringing triumph to righteousness (*dharma*) and the doers of the good *(sukṛts)*.

The seers of God, perceiving the harsh darkness of the *Kali* age creeping, had undertaken the task of bringing down God to the earth, so that *dharma* might prevail. Godā, in a sense, continued the tradition and movement initiated by the other Āḻvārs and prophets.

Behind the ecstatic and endearing terms used by Godā we can see her anxiety to restore God to His high

place in the minds and hearts of men, as the one object of their adoration, as the one illuminating power in the spiritual darkness. God is accessible in the shrine of the human heart burning the lamp of love, and can be attained in this very life.

No one who has been touched by the divine light can ever find comfort in mere sleep on the terrestrial bed: maybe he finds his bed in God Himself. Asks Godā: "Art thou asleep even though thou heardest the songs of praise of the destroyer of Késin?" Spiritual awakening is like a dawn or a new birth. It is the awakening of the soul to transcendent values and existence. "Is she dumb or deaf or an ignoramus that she does not get up from her dreams?" asks Godā. "When Reality is envisioned, who would wrap oneself in mere imagination?" asks Godā.

The sixteenth hymn stresses the need for absolute surrender to God. One should depend on God only and seek no other refuge or shelter. One should seek to be enjoyed by God alone. One should not seek to enjoy any other. This leads to true surrender. It is surrender that is spiritual, mental and physical, which means the offering of oneself wholly, in all one's parts, to God.

The eighteenth hymn brings out the necessity of seeking the help of Śrī, the Divine Mother, who leads one to transcendence. Here she is invoked as the well-plaited one, assisting God in all His works and grace. The Divine Mother is the supreme teacher and companion and guide of the seeking-soul. She plays the mystic role of relating the Divine's concern for the soul, and the soul's passion for the Lord, to one another. The Āḻvār's, specially St. Śaṭhakopa, utilises the Mother as showing concern for the soul's condition and narrating it to the Lord, and *vice versa*. God as always accompanied by the Divine Mother is the mediator between the souls and God. She is the

inseparable companion of God in all His descents (*avatāras*) as well as in His transcendental supracosmic aspect.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is implored to wake up from his *yoganidra* to receive the praises of his devotees, with words that render them most effective and appealing. The maidens led by Godā sing thus:

> Like the enemies who have been defeated by Thee and enfeebled, falling prostrate at Thy feet, we too, are singing Thy praise at Thy doorstep (defeated or overcome by Thy beauty).

Godā then requests the Lord to ascend His throne quitting His bed—the throne of the purified heart of the devotee, whose impartial ruler He ever is. Thus she seeks the residence of God permanently in her true spiritual consciousness as the object of her inward vision.

The supreme mystery of God's nature is exquisitely expressed in the twenty-fifth hymn:

> "When Thou wert born as a son of one (Devakī), that very night, becoming the son of another (Yaśoda). Thou wert brought, making futile the wicked intentions of Kamsa, who could not brook being thwarted, and Thou stood as fire in His entrails. O Nedumāl! We have come to Thee seeking from Thee our goal (*parai*). If Thou grantest that transcendent fruit, we shall sing Thy wealth, freed from exhaustion and enjoy bliss."

The Father of the Universe was born as a son to a mortal woman. The Unborn took birth. The Light of the universe who illumines the sun and moon and the stars, was reared in secret. The Light of the world was dark in colour. The Lord of Vaikuṇṭha, which is greater than the city of the gods (Amarāvati), was brought up in the cowherd stalls. The fearless Being who grants to

all freedom from fear, was hidden out of fear. These phenomena reveal the supreme paradox between the human and the divine. These are said to be mystic secrets which could be understood only by the mystic consciousness. Not knowing God's divine nature, His mystic birth divine, men have treated most *avatāras* as just human and interpreted them accordingly. But soaked as Godā was in the mythological tradition of the incarnations of God—not only one incarnation but many—it would be difficult to understand the many-sided significance of these hymns unless one is acquainted with all of them.

The whole tenor of these hymns reveals the beauty, the truth and glory and kindness of God.

As the culmination of her hard spiritual practices and devotional yearnings, conducted under her father's care Godā found her fulfilment of her aspirations. She became Āṇḍāl, one who has attained God for her husband.

The other composition of Godā, known as *Nācciyār Tirumoḷi*, comprises fourteen sections, each of which contains ten hymns. This composition narrates the course of a vow undertaken to appeal to Kāmadeva (Lord of Love) to help the increase of love of God for man. Those who know the famous mythological story of how Kāmadeva was approached to help Pārvati (*Umā*) secure for her the love of Śiva, and how in the process he was burnt to ashes by the great God, will recognize that all lovers seek to gain the affection of God for the fulfilment of their love for Him. It is not enough that man should love God, which of course is a difficult thing; it is also necessary that God should love the yearning soul. This motif is natural to a woman in love. The divine desire has to intercede and make God love the soul that has prepared itself through *tapas* (askesis) for receiving the

love of God. A total surrender to God brings about the choice of the soul by God to shower His grace and love on it. Kāmadeva is the high-priest of marriage, conjugal affection. Spiritual union is a marriage depending upon the help of Kāmadeva as much as in the case of ordinary sacramental marriage.

In this work, Godā, in order to become Āṇḍāl, dreams incessantly of her Beloved and prays sleeplessly for the fulfilment of her desire for the Divine. His beauty is irresistible. Sleep becomes impossible because it is conquered through devotional remembrance of His beauty, and God-hunger replaces physical hunger. She dreams of her future high estate: she dreams also of the close dalliance that she anticipates: and this anticipation tosses her, awaking her to gloom and distress, frustration and fear. The unceasing flow of thoughts does not grant her peace of mind or body. She dreams of the gorgeous marriage ceremony awaiting her—a marriage more glamorous and glorious than that of kings and princesses.

This *Tirumoḷi* is a study in rapture—the rapture of contemplation, meditation, concentric and continuous, and absorption in the beauty of God. One discerns in this composition the whole gamut of sensory, vital, erotic, mental and spiritual feelings interpenetrating in such a way as to present a heightened condition of mystic union. The result is a poetic creativity that almost precipitates a Vision of a profound spiritual order. The spiritual marriage of Godā with the Lord was performed by her foster-father Viṣṇucitta in the temple of Śrīrangam. It is said that she was merged in the image. Āṇḍāl as she now became after mergence, sought to dwell in God and show the path of spiritual union through love to all souls seeking the marriage with God in all the three worlds.

CHAPTER IX

ŚAṬHAKOPA

(Nammāḻvār)

Saint Śathakopa is held in the highest esteem as the Master Mystic of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism. He embodies the fullest mystical excellences and his experiences are of the highest spiritual order. He was recognized as the *Kulapati* (Founder-Seer) of Śrī Vaiṣṇava theology. He is endearingly called Our Saint (Nammāḻvār).

The story of this great saint is that he was born of one Kari and he himself was known as Māran. As soon as he was born he was so absorbed in the contemplation of God that he was not given to taking anything, but soon took up residence under a tamarind tree and remained there. His effulgence spread far and was seen by his foremost disciple Madhurakavi, who was on tour in the North. He hastened to the South following the direction of the effulgence. He reached the city of the Āḻvār and found that the effulgence radiated from the person seated under the tamarind tree. The saint was absorbed and was seen to take no food or water; nor would he talk. So Madhurakavi standing humbly before him put him a question: "If a soul is born of matter what does it eat and where does it rest?" The saint immediately replied, "It eats That and There it rests."* Thus Madhurakavi discovered that the Āḻvār was eating the Divine (spoken of by the *Upaniṣads* as the Food of the mystics) and was living in the Godhead even though he had taken birth in the mortal body (*śettatin vayarrir*). This meant

* *Śettatin vayarrir siriyadu pirandāl ettaittinruenge kidakkum? Attaittinru ange kidakkum,*" said Nammāḻvār. Attai refers to God, That, not to 'this' the mortal body (*acit*) or *prakriti*. cf. My article in Golden Jubilee Number of Śrī Ramaṇa, 1949 pp. 233-4.

that emancipated souls (though finite, *siriyadu*, smal things) dwell in God and God is their food, breath, mind wisdom, and bliss and everything. He himself has spoken of service of God as the greatest gift of God, exceeding even liberation from the cycle of births.

St. Śathakopa is said to have conquered the breath (śatha) which causes transmigration by the supreme grace of God even while remaining in the womb of his mother, and therefore put an end to the cycle of transmigratory births. He was a liberated soul, and was thus enjoying God in all ways, living and moving and having his being in God.

The teachings of this great soul are said to be capable of liberating any one. His influence on the course of religious history is enormous. A poet of supreme simplicity and beauty, he was much more a transformer of man than a mere poet. His works have been compared in their depth and seriousness with revelational writings of the *Veda*.

He wrote four works, namely, *Tiruviruttam*, *Tiruvāśarīyam*, *Tiruvāymoḷi* and *Periya Tiruvandādi*. Orthodox expounders say that these four works correspond to the four Vedas, *Ṛk*, *Yajus*, *Sāma* and *Atharvaṇa*. But this seems more to be mere number correspondence than real contential correspondence. However we may be able to glean certain basic trends.

St. Śathakopa became the symbol of a whole personality of divine experience. In later years he was apotheosised and his icon was placed in every temple and also symbolised as the feet of God, following his own statement, "By becoming servants of the Lord we have verily become as it were His sacred sandals (*Periya Tiruvandādi*, 31).

All other Āḻvārs were considered to be partial *avatāras* (*amśāvatāras*) of this superb mystic.

TIRUVIRUTTAM

They told me those were males, though truly females:
He who hath eyes sees this, the blind discern not.
—Rg. V. I.164.16

Tiruviruttam is the first work of St. Śathakopa. The name has been given to this work firstly because it is written in the *viruttam* metre. This however is not the only reason. The psychological reason is that it is a narration of an important event that has happened to the Saint, the most important, and as such this is a *vṛttānta* composed in the metre suitable to it and called therefore *viruttam*.

The *vṛttānta* or event is the Realization of the Divine by the Saint. The soul is placed in the position of the beloved lover and the Divine as the beloved of all. The symbolic meaning is fully exploited and the knowledge of the Divine given to the soul by the teacher is the Mother's endearing assistance given to the Soul—its child —in its attempts to know and attain the Divine union. Union with God is the goal of the individual soul, it is not a goal determined by reason though it can be chosen in that way too, it is a necessity of the soul to attain God in whatever way could lead it to Him. In the language of the aesthetics it may be called the *rasa* known as *Śṛngāra* but it is more truly the *yoga* of Attainment of the Union with God that leads to the experience of ecstasy of which the human lover-beloved union is a pale reflection and perhaps a distortion, or an inversion. The *pravṛtti* of the latter human approach is the inversion of the *nivṛtti rasa* of the Yoga. The *Tiruviruttam*

claims to get rid of the *dehātma-bhrama*, body-soul illusion, which is itself an inversion of values—that the physical beauty is that of the soul or the body is the soul. and aims at removing the obstacles to *Brahmānubhava*. This is the essence of spiritual love (*Daiva rasa*).*

Thus though clothed in the aspect of the feminine the soul's approach to the Divine, true to the subtle suggestion of the *Veda* itself, it clearly speaks of the importance of the individual approach to the Divine for total dedication and surrender and love. The Divine is the only Male or Husband who can save one and all other males who are but persons, masks of the feminine. trying to appear as male. Every soul has to realise this seriously.

Whether they are gods or men or other creatures, all souls individually have to realise their femaleness. Thus the *Bhagavad Gīta* has clearly enunciated that God is the *Kṣetrajña* and all others are but fields (*kṣetras*). Indeed the nature of each individual soul is to be the womb or *yoni* of creation by the Divine, and as such all partake of that nature of *Prakṛti*. The whole question bristles with the problem of how each soul can become the *kṣetra* as such. This Śrī Rāmānuja solves by his unique concept of *śarīra* or body wherein he holds that both the conscient and the unconscient are but bodies (supported and sustained and governed and enjoyed by God for his sole purposes). Thus the souls become *śarīra* (body), *anga* (limb), *śakti* (power), *kṣetra* (location), of God, and thus they are the female centres of the creative activity of God.

The unique approach of the feminine might also be said to have been caused by the experience of the

* Periyavāccān Pillai's introduction to *Periya Tiruvandādi* makes out this point clearly.

Wonderful Beauty of God. If the austere Vedantic approach has been, despite the impassioned utterances of *Yājñavalkya, (Br. Up.,* IV.iii.33) and of Ānandavalli of the *Taittirīya,* the Revelation of the Nature of Ultimate Being Brahman, the mystic soul of Śathakopa was seized with the Beauty-Experience of Brahman. The Brahman of the *Upaniṣads* was indeed the Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhāgavata* who was the personification of Absolute Beauty. It is with this awareness that we should approach the work of Śathakopa. The supreme entrancing attractiveness of God, this is the central note, and perhaps the other notes are but aids to this note. The Divine has other *rasas* than the *rasas* of the *ālamkārikas,* such as *Saundarya, Divya, Śānta, Ānanda, Cit and Sat.* There are of course the *Aiśvarya, Vīrya, Tejas, Śakti, Bala, Jñāna;* and *Nirguṇa rasas* which would also naturally be the experience of the Divine as the whole of His being. The human drama may have its small *rasas,* but the Divine Drama (*Līlā*) has infinite and full *rasas* that permeate and fuse all in one Divine alchemy of Experience of the Utter and the Absolute.*

The supreme attractiveness of God becomes the psychological imperative for the consciousness to move towards Him, seek no other company, no other ordainer, no other master and beloved. It is this beauty which seems to be of the nature of magnetism and heat so to

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* *Ch. Up.,* VIII. xii 5: *Divyena cakṣuṣā manasaitā kāmān paśyan ramate.*
3: *Jakṣat krīḍan ramamāṇaḥ.*
Tait. Br., X.5: *Kāmānhi kāmarūpī.*
Ar., I. ii: *So'śnute sarvān kāmān saha brāhmaṇa vipaścitaḥ: Viṣṇu Dharma: So eva Vāsudevo sau sākṣāt puruṣa ucyate, strīprāyam itarat sarāv jagad brahmapurossaram. Puruṣa muktebhyo'pi vānmanasa'paricchedya guṇavibhava svabhāvam dadāti hi Bhagavān.*

speak which melts and heats and attracts till the soul enters the Divine and enjoys the bliss of union.

The first stage in the life of Śathakopa is this divine love-stage. It is not the lust for things of the earth or of heaven but love for the Divine presence and existential union or real union. It is essential too that none but those who have had this divine experience at the beginning itself in some form can overcome the attractiveness to outer objects: fasting for the body is not enough: it is the Vision of the Divine that makes the lust for things cease: *param dṛṣtvā nivartate*: (*Bh. Gīta*, II. 59).

Orthodox writers hold that one of the names of Śathakopa is Māran and explain this by saying that the Alvār was so named because he changed utterly godward no sooner than he beheld Him in the temple. This happened, it is stated, on the 12th day after his birth when he was taken to the temple as was the custom and also as he did not open his eyes at all during those twelve days. The first object he beheld thus after he was born was God's image in the temple, and thereafter he was God-man. This may be fanciful etymology derived from *māru* (change).*

Man must change Godward: without it the wonder that is God cannot be seen as the most beautiful. Other

* cf. *Viṣṇusahasranāma Bhāsya*, by Parāśara Bhaṭṭa, name 14. Māran may be rendered as 'changed being' from the root māru. But it may also mean 'the death-giver' of lust or the death-giver to that force that leads to rebirth, even as the word *śathāri* means. The word Māra or Mara reveals the lover aspect of God Kāma in mythology, one who changes the non-lover into lover as in the most famous episode of Umā-Śiva-Kāma. The Sanskrit word *Māra* resonates and has symphony with the Tamil word *Māran*, as the soft *r* is used in the one case whereas the *r* cannot philologically be referred to it in the other case. However it is esoterically valuable.

eyes verily have to be got and it is all God's grace answering to the transcendent desire for God on the part of the individual soul. Such is the mystic's yearning that it seeks a transcendental change in oneself rather than seek that God should change and descend to the level of human visibility and measure.

However much the individual soul might like God to become amenable to his desires and wishes, yet it is in the long run desirable that he should change over to the divine nature. Man seeks to make God in his own image, but it is right that man should seek to grow into God's nature: God aims at making man of His own image.

Tiruviruttam was written for the sake of rescuing men who have fallen into the pit of inferior births and further still into a second pit of lust (kāma) and wandering ceaselessly, and thus to lift them up so that they may enjoy the divine status. Kiḍāmbi Accān or Praṇatārthiharācārya describes this to be the main purpose of this holy work. This is obviously the fruit of its study, and the intention is that the love of God that this composition can engender in the reader or hearer who is devout is such that it will be *sādhana* (method) towards final emancipation through God's grace.

Tiruviruttam has to be studied firstly as a hymn or rather a series of hymns, revealing the reactions of a soul caught up by the Lord's beauty, which from then on has elected to follow It as its one and only supreme object that shall govern the rest of its existence. The first verse thus shows the soul which has already beheld the Godhead and His Beauty, Who has in His transcending Grace descended into manifold births in human and other wombs so as to relieve the distress of the souls so dear to Him. appeals to Him to hearken to its prayer to remove the

obstacles to its *Brahmānubhava* (Experience of the Divine in His supreme Nature).*

> Thou Impeller of the Eternals! Thou who wert born in all manner of womb for the sake of saving souls so that we may not be touched henceforth by the consciousness in the false, the performance of evil deeds, the dirty body and the qualities that are therein. Condescend to give ear to the true words of Thy slave.**

This then is the first vision of the Lord Transcendent, who is eminently the Impeller of all beings, eternals and non-eternals. He indeed has come down in all His glory among creatures to lead them up to the havens of bliss and sorrowlessness and truth. It is also to teach them not to identify themselves with their changing and disease-ridden bodies but rather to devote themselves to the service of Him who is the abode of all purity and excellence and perfection. His Grace is that which will remove the gravitational pull of the lower and make one free from the burdens of life and body.

So much is the *avatāra* a descent of Utter Grace that uplifts and grants a sense of New Life and Higher Life that the Āḻvār is overpowered by the Love of God to His creatures which is found to be infinitely more than what the Āḻvār bears towards Him. The Vision of course is short-lived for the verses that follow involve and intimate the feeling of separation.

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* Periyavāccān Pillai points out that this is so because the first and last verses of *Tiruviruttam* repeat the words of appeal: *aḍiyen śeyyum viṇṇappam* and *viṇṇappam śeydu.*

** There is truth in the illusory as well as in those which are not. It is this truth that makes one take the illusory to be true and it is experience that reveals that it is illusory and that the element of truth it is that led us astray rather than the non-truth.

The next group of verses, 2 to 24, are all intended to demonstrate the growing intensities of the Āḻvār's soul, the soul that has had the glimpse of God, like a lightning flash in a dark and heavy night. These verses whether spoken by the maids (the feeling aspect of the soul according to some psychologists of this field) or by the soul itself in its cognitivity or by the devotees' senses (*indriyas*) or the Mother (the intuitive gnostic friend of the soul and teacher, Śrī) or the teachers, are all representative of the stages of the deepening intensifying strata of consciousness. The deep penetrating movement of the psychological consciousness as it penetrates the mystic layers of being are represented by images of depths and heights by the hymnists.

The second verse gives a description of the love-smitten soul; the third reveals the soul addressing the mind to follow the Lord and to be in His glorious company which consists of the three Goddesses, Śrī, Bhū and Nappinnai, who move with Him as His shadow inseparably. The mind also has to become as it were a shadow or rather to shadow the footsteps of the Lord. This leads to extreme one-pointed devotion, facilitated by the beauty already perceived. The entire mind has been so much absorbed by the Divine, there was hardly anything left of it to follow or appreciate the basil of the Lord or the fragrance celestial of God's person.

So far the mind has been lost to God's beauty. So much so, the Āḻvār finds his soul firmly following the Lord and the three-fold Mothers even as they themselves do, shadowing Him.

The fifth verse begins with a pant. The oppressive winds are up: senses revolt against this concentration on the internal and higher Divine, being outward-turned

by habit towards objects and also only seeing below and on the line of horizontality. There seems to be danger ahead: passions of earth are alluring forces: but they are apprehended, thanks to the memory of their earlier experiences, as leading to pain. The Northern winds symbolising the raging fury of the feelings are blowing and the soul is tossed between the mind that has lost itself to God and the senses that egg it on towards worldly objects. But the abiding passion of the soul for God is beginning to be established more firmly than ever before, thanks to this rude shaking by the Northern winds. So much so, the images of the external world are made to refer to this central Understanding of the arrival of the Lord. The rainy season is thought to be near by: the soul's hope is that the Lord would return to it, as the beloved husband returns to his home during the rainy season.* God's home indeed is the soul's heart even as the home of the soul is God's heaven (Vaikuṇṭha). But the rains, the little graces that precede the advent of the real rainy season, are not of the rainy season but of the summer. The heat is unbearable: the glare of it is also intolerable: the scorching heat of the summer is to be followed by the cooling rains. The soul as lover (*Nāyaki*) now appeals to all the devotee-souls who go on pilgrimage to the Hills of Tirumalai to speak to her beloved Lord about her wretched plight. She has eyes illumined with devotion: all her senses are entirely calmed down and free from fever of object-lust: and she has love overflowing or rather intense aspiration for the Highest ex-

* The rainy season motif is mystical, symbolical and real. The *Rāmāyaṇa* mentions it. Kālidāsa has made it classical in his *Meghadūta*. *Dūtyakāvyas* are plentiful. The Āḻvār uses this in the *Tiruvāymoḻi*, I. 4: II.1: VI.1. & 8; IX.5 & 7. Venkatanātha uses it in his *Hamsasandeśa*.

perience of Him who adorns the mighty hills of spiritual eminence.**

The devout souls look at her proper love with understanding and enjoy such pure love. The Āḻvār's soul is excited further at their approbation of her love for God: the senses forget even to do their proper functions and are more absorbed in the object which the senses and the mind are pursuing. The senses can pursue the visible and audible, fragrance and so on, but cannot pursue that which is beyond their reach: it is only the mind that can go far. The one supreme passion of the soul is the Supreme Transcendent and the whole frame is ablaze with it. The soul cries out to God and for God. The fever flame of love is being fanned up to white heat by the Northern winds. The world-life without God is felt to be oppressive,—it now appears to be a vast ocean which is dark, gloomy and serenely indifferent to the higher hopes of divine union—life itself becomes meaningless and an illusion. The whole being is in a state of collapse: "Has the sky uplifted the ocean; Or has the ocean gone over to embrace the sky?" (This is surely an immediate experience when the water column of the stormy sea rises itself to receive the cloud waters funneling towards the column of rising waters of the ocean).

The next picture almost realises the world deluge: "Is it the time when the Lord's earth was carried away by the sky and deluging ocean? Or is it the rainy season? O Beautiful One, from thine deep ocean-eyes

** Tirumalai in its geographical representation is Tirupati (Chittoor Dt., Andhra Pradesh, India). It comprises seven hills. Śrīnivāsa is the Godhead. His annual festival is in the rainy season, symbolically stating that He is at home or back at home, at Tirumalai. Union with God must be in His highest form, the transcendent, and in His highest place which is His Home. Vaikuṇṭha and Vengaḍam are thus related in Āḻvār theogony.

streams of water are flowing" (verse 18).[1]

Such is the self-dejection. The heart's lord, the bridegroom, had not arrived.

The physical conditions presaged in the above verses give the great psychic upheavels of the soul in its embodied state: and these really relieve the soul from body-considerations; the Divine experience is not a physical ill-health nor its index or condition: the physical ill-health makes man a creature of his physical body and he thinks of naught else: the Divine passion on the contrary brushes aside the physical torment or ill-health and is living a purely mental and spiritual life. The shift in the axis of reference in embodiedness is often missed by many: one result is the overcoming of the illusion that one is one's bodily existence for even mental awareness vanishes.

There goes along with the previous realization (not exclusively nor even consciously cognitive), a deepening faith and love along with an increasing sense of desperation suspecting its own faith, acquirements, strength and purity. Any efforts to cure these depressing symptoms with the magic of rationalism or irrationalism such as is practised by devil-ostracisers are also foredoomed to failure. The soul knows that the only cure can be the Realization of Union with the Divine, because it also knows that the cause of this divine infatuation (miscalled disease) is not any human or sub-human force or power or personality but the Divine only.* "Her pain is from a God exceeding great from no slight God who lists to wheedling words! You with trident! stop! Ye mothers Hark! Naming His name who swallowed the seven worlds,

1. All poetical translations are from J.M.S. Hooper: *Hymns of the Alvars.*

* Devil-ostracism motif is found in the *Madals* of Tirumangai.

garland her hair with fair *tulasi!*" (v. 20). The soul in this closed state of absolute absorption is of course a most distressing sight.

There is present however a deep pathos. The guiding hand of a motherly consciousness or personality alone rescues it from drifting deeper and deeper into disengagement with the world. This motherly personality is indeed the friend, benevolent and knowing, teacher or leader who may indeed be the instrument and the path (*puruṣakāra*), because of her deep and abiding intimacy with the Divine. May be they are the Mothers themselves who, shadow-like, live and move and have their being in God. Thus grows the period of utter devotion of the mind, when the mind has become God-filled (*Brahma-bhūta*).

Then there is felt the gathering of gentle breezes carrying the *tulasi* scent of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, a different scent from the scent of the *tulasi* garland adorning her hair, a divine fragrance. The Divine is felt to be approaching the soul in devotional lament, returning the look with kindness and love, encouraging it to follow His every movement all the time.

High sensitivity about the presence of God is one of the most important fruits of yearning love. When there occurs the divine response, be it ever a look, even lasting only a moment, the joy is intense.

> "What in this world will not *tulasi* do? (Plant of the King; the King of the mighty Gods, Lord of all heavenly ones, Our Lord! It has loosed my bracelet* and has turned crooked the rod that rules over Kannan's earth and heaven?" (v. 25).

* The bracelet motif is found in the *Bhāgavata*, X. 60.24.

Tulasi worn by the soul firmly calls up the response from God who is wearer of the *tulasi* (*ocimum sanctum*). To wear the name of God is to make God lean towards the soul, asking for what the call is made. So too the *tulasi* worn by a soul calls the Divine to it.

The soul has an ecstatic feeling but not yet a vision of the Presence. The subtle Being who cannot be seen by the eye, heard by the ear, who cannot be thought of by the mind, is to be seen with God-gifted eyes and ears and by the divinised mind. The soul yet seeing and hearing all things from its embodied condition depends entirely on the organs of sense and action, and cannot even understand anything about the divine sight and audition and cognition. However, as the soul is dragged inward and the senses turn inwards, it is dragged into the divine centre. It yearns for the experience of the presence not indeed in the sensory manner but in what we may call the divine-sensory manner. The great wise words of the scriptures come to it and the soul hopes that He does keep up His promises. The soul lapses into itself and does not any longer care for itself and its existence. Its suffering is not so much due to its loss but the loss of God in all its existence or being. This second stage reveals the soul's disgust at every thing and it is seen that it develops envy or jealousy at every other being that has some sort of connection and contact with God. Swans, pure birds, swift messengers, those discriminating birds that live and move in the region of 'mind-lake' (Mānasarovar) refuse to take her message to God (verily because they cannot go to the Divine who is much farther than their wings could carry them). She pleads however with them and the herons and clouds too, to take her plaint to the Lord. She even laments that outer objects prevent inward growth and total offering.

Her own voice, friendly to her, feel the callousness and irresponsiveness of the Lord and there is the maternal self-regarding voice within that even fears that she has entered into a veritable jungle of death (v. 29-37). Was it not already realised by the soul that even the roar of the rain-clouds (so much symbolic of the Divine Presence) only put the question:

> "Who is that damsel who would even now Her life enjoy separated from her husband?" (v.19).

True indeed she has crossed the ocean of *saṃsāra* (world-pleasure) that separates one from the Beloved, who is indeed the ocean of bliss, beauty and truth. The rain cloud is representative of the Higher Ocean of God. The true rainy season has arrived. The date of union is at last at hand.

> "The Mother (Śrī) whose eyes are like rain, born of the lotus when she mounted the serpent-bed was accepted (by her Lord) on the white waves of the blue Ocean; The Mother (Earth) wailing aloud to the sky that Viṣṇu was cruel wept shedding tears of rain on her mountains." (v.52).

Likewise she has become tear-filled, inconsolable, since none but God could console her and free her from her grief. Urgency prompts her to send further messengers, the beetles and bees (v.54) which imbibe the honey from His garlands, not to speak of God Himself being called *madhu*—the honey of the seekers of the Divine (v.50).

Then happens the arrival of the Lord not yet in front of the devoted soul yet intimated by the cool sweet breezes:

> "A cool south wind has been secretly with

honey sweet of His *tulasi;* rainlike has it caressed my limbs and ornaments." (v.56)

The third coming is nearer and more intimate than anything till now. The Lord's love for the devotee is made manifest by His secret presence that however spreads an aura of happiness all round. Can the light of the Sun be secret, or can the fragrance of the divine *tulasi* be suppressed? God's passion too is seen to be reciprocative and indeed very sincere. God indeed seeks to remove the agony of the soul in separation. However, a too sudden coming might be too much strain for the soul to bear. A shock is to be avoided in the good as in the evil tidings! Thus the gradualness of the coming of the Divine works itself up to normal plenitude of joy and dedication. The soul yearns for light and God grants it light, for, God is light: the soul hankers after loss of heaviness and pain and God grants it lightness and freedom from pain: the soul craves for love and absorption and union, and seeks to open up itself to Him alone, and God in His fullness opens up Himself too to the soul so that it could fully enter into Him. The Divine enters into the heart of the soul, even as the soul enters into the heart of God. But all this desire for absorption and union has to mature in the very being of the soul. Further, not in the sanctuary but in openness lies the fulfilment. The soul has found Him in its deep sleep and *samādhi,* and in its dreams too, but not yet in the waking consciousness. The inner faith grows from within and yet would justify it in works which have to deal with the world at large. The normal life of the soul is to live in the waking as well as in other stages in God and for God and by God alone. Then alone the goal of perfect attainment is achieved. The soul has to get this assurance.

Thus dejection again supervenes but this is on a higher and deeper plane and the ordinary ways of physicians, magicians and sooth-sayers and others are absolutely insufficient to help the soul or appease its hunger. Friends, true friends who know the path and know the ways of God, are the need. Such friends indeed do arrive: when the pupil is ready the master is ready: when the soul is ready, awaiting to lead it to its goal are the great teachers of eternity. They are messengers from God. Thus one friend (and the commentator holds her to be none other than Śrī, Transcendent Grace) says that the greatness of God is a sign of His Goodness and not a sign of His power as such. The power of Goodness is greater than the power of arbitrary rule over all, or attainment and possession of lordship over the elements, etc. God's greatness, goodness, puissance, condescension, and other divine attributes are narrated to the Āḻvār by this supreme divine messenger of God; the divine friend intercedes and communicates the graces of the soul to God too, her uninterrupted meditation, devotion, and perfect dedication and surrender without any reservation. Thus in the soul develops the most important feeling that God's grace is flowing towards it and it refuses to listen to others who say that she has not God's grace (v.64). It finds fullest consolation in reciting constantly His name (v.64). A mere *japa* (repetition) of God's name is not of course to be mistaken with this deepening taste of recitation and constant remembrance of God through His name. The usual *japa* tends to make the meaning or the connotation of the name pass and leaves just the sound behind hovering between the lips. The real *japa* on the other hand leads to deepening connotation and arouses the mind to

seek to know more and more about the sound itself and how it is connected with the object of one's sole adoration. Thus arises the illumination from the sound, and the object begins to get into view. This it is that develops the inner vision of the Real Object which one knows from knowing seers through the Name.

By this constant remembrance, the nature of the soul itself becomes luminous, bewitching; even the very body of the individual soul reflects the light and joy of the Divine. Even the very Mother of the universe gets enraptured and infatuated by the soul's looks. The hour of Night should not lead to despair but to the return of the Beloved: however much the sweet night covers herself up with darkness it is but to throw into strongest relief the lightning-beauty of the Divine. However, the soul does not yet know the beauty of the night but only its terrors. Cries she:

"Now comes to destroy me quite
Comes this one night a thousand ages long."

She herself discovers that she is maturing into God's love and her human approach to God is being dissolved by the new dimension of the Divine approach into her, changing her quite. No longer is she moving herself to God but she feels that God is modifying her to suit His love. It is quite out of the scope of the Āḻvār psychology of love to demand that God become man to meet man or woman, but to insist on man's change into that condition acceptable to God's nature and will. There is in certain types of Humanism and anthropomorphism this human demand on God in order to prove God's godliness, but is it not much more significant that God proves His godliness by changing man and woman into god-nature, fit for God? The true evolution of the soul

is towards godliness and godnature and not to retain the human however much the human may be beautiful and attractive. In this process of divinisation (of being made *śuddha sattva*) the soul finds itself being led towards the Divine impelled by a force also recognized to be Divine which is irresistable. Self-offering is as it were the inevitable act, and, whilst others may say that it is the soul that is advancing towards the Divine, the soul in its heart of hearts knows that it is God who is pulling it to Himself. The soul swept into this movement of the Divine is verily experiencing the madness of love (v. 70) for its floating asail on the raft of God is cooler, sweeter than the cool breezes of the moon-lit night so dear to ordinary lovers. This blue night of the Divine is verily stronger and sweeter than the moon-lit night of lovers (v.61-73).

The Night which was intolerably hot and wearisome had thanks to the arrival of the Beloved Godhead changed the Āḻvār soul, perceptibly too (v. 74-75). Everywhere she sees the glory (*vibhava*) of God.

It is under such conditions of psychical exaltation and complete overwhelming absorption that the *tulasi*-cool fragrant breeze blows from the direction of the Divine:

> "A soft south breeze is blowing that has played on the *tulasi* on His head who knows all things, His great eyes closed in sleep (of *Yoga*) reclining on breaking waves: the Lord Who gulped the world, Who did a mount uproot and uphold for shade." (v.74)

Everything seems to be set for the culmination of the journey of love. God's acceptance and union with the soul indeed are superb fulfilments, *siddhis*, for the soul.

No longer is the soul alone and no longer has night any terrors for it. Embraced by God the soul is in God. Abiding in God it has attained blessedness and its divinisation becomes a fact.

Sings the Āḻvār about this attainment of vision, in God, of all, in ecstatic terms:

"Many a different way of worshipping
And many clashing creeds from different minds,
And in the many creeds their many gods,
Thou hast made spreading abroad Thy Form
O Thou Matchless! I will proclaim my love for Thee." (v.96)

"There is naught but grief for
Those who have looked and looked,
At dawn and sunset, age succeeding age;
But can sleep ever come to those who gaze
Joyful with mighty passion rare at Māl
Eternal Whom adoring gods surround." (v.97)

"From sleepless seers and others who adore
He takes away the pain of endless births!
The mystery of mighty form of Him
Unique and self-dependent—butter-thief,
Hard even for gods to grasp that slighting word."

The soul that attains the Divine transcends the state of sleep, forgetting its unique duty *(dharma)* to God. Sleepiness is the characteristic of even those who are apparently awake but do things that reveal no awareness of their duty to God, which is verily the basic duty and wakefulness of being. The *Gīta* verily speaks of that to which the seers are awake and to which they are asleep, which is the inverse of ordinary man. Thus the seers and gods are those who know their duty and therefore are awake and it is they who can truly guide

the soul. The transcendence of sleep is not in becoming awake to the senses and the mind but in becoming awake to the presence of the Divine everywhere, above and within.

The *Tiruviruttam* is an account of the pilgrimage of the soul to its transcendence over its ignorance, sleep and sloth in which it is caught up in the body. The Divine is the only means and the goal of the soul towards its own union with it. That alone is its real waking condition, not that which sensists claim. The Āḻvār *sādhana* through prayer and praise and constant remembrance reveals the several levels of its ascent from the sensory to the imaginary and thence to the awakening of the inner workings of the Divine Nature that works out in its own manner.

The pilgrimage of the soul to its own Real Being is a unique document and throws considerable light on the stages and poises of the soul in its ascent.

This same theme is elaborated in greater detail in the *Tiruvāymoḷi* and there too the same motifs are used. In a sense the *Tiruviruttam* can be considered to be an epitome of the *Tiruvāymoḷi*.

TIRUVĀSARĪYAM

Tiruvāśarīyam is the next composition of St. Śathakopa. The name of this composition itself means an observance with due rites or forms of worship of the One Supreme Divine. It is clear that every prayer has a rite implicit in it. This is called *carya* or *kriya*. The adoration of the Divine Lord is the highest and holiest rite. What other *yajña* has to be performed by the devotee than the *jñāna yajña* or *ātma-yajña*, as the great Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa has himself stated? (*B.G.* IV.27).

Devotion is the overflowing love of God, the mystic ghee that is being offered in the altar flame of knowledge and divine will so as to grant results far above any terrestrial or super-terrestrial benefits which the ordinary rites and sacrifices may grant. Sacrifice considered from the mystic standpoint is not anything other than the proper self-offering for work, transformation, indwelling and possession and finally elevation to the Lord's infinite mansions. The *Yajur-Veda* is devoted to the Sacrifice. The *Śukla Yajur-Veda (Vājasaneya Samhita)* concludes with the *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad* which shows that *karma* must be done as long as one lives and one should desire to do this *karma* of self-offering to the Divine throughout life and that performance of right *karma* does not entail any sin or limitation. There are three types of *karma*, *karma* of *pravṛtti* (descent into bondage), *karma* of *nivṛtti* (called *dharma* by some, especially Buddha), and thirdly *karma* that is implicit in all relationship with God for each soul in so far as it is to live and move and have its being in God. *Karma,* (action) *akarma* (nonaction), and *vikarma* or special *karma*, that is, the transcendent variety of *karma* which the Vaiṣṇavas describe as *kainkarya* are then the three types of *karma* to be recognized; the last one is what one must ever do whether released or bound or eternally free. The doing of that kind of duty or *dharma (divya-karma)* is essentially what does not limit the individual or bind him in the cycle of births and deaths, bondages and ignorance, and mortality.

Renouncing oneself to Him in all one's being, one attains the Immortal Being. The supreme Object of our duty is then always with us. This is the *Ṛtam Bṛhat.* The *Kratu* is God alone, Viṣṇu, the three-strided one, primordial cause, the Source of all birth and goal of all process or *laya.*

The Trivikrama avatāra* of Viṣṇu, the primeval place in the milk-ocean, His perfect creative *yoga* called suṣupti (good sleep) of the transcendent *prajña*, and that wonderful form the gods ever adore and would like to behold for ever and without interruption, are all gathered into this first hymn, for they exist together in the Vision of Śathakopa. Indeed it is well known that any worship offered to the lower forms or rather forms taken in the lower planes of creation should be linked up with the others which are higher. Thus the Transcendent Form of God beyond all description and understanding must be thought of along with the creative Form (*vyūha*) and the descents (*avatāras*) and the temples and the heart. It is in this integral worship that the Vedic *kratus* (sacrifices) as well as the *Āgama pūjās* in temples specialised.*

* References in the *Yajur-veda* to Trivikrama are many: Bk. II.25; Bk. V.15-28; Bk. VI.2.3; Bk. X.19; Bk. XII.5; Bk. XXVII.49; Bk. XXXIV.43; Bk. XXXVI.9; The most characteristic description however is given in the course of XXIII. 49-52. (Griffith's trans.)

"Friend of the God! I ask for information if thou in spirit has obtained knowledge.

Hath Viṣṇu this whole universe pervaded in the three steps wherein the God is worshipped?

I also am in these three steps of Viṣṇu wherewith this universe is permeated.

The earth and heaven I circle in a movement and this heaven's summit with a single organ.

What are the things which *Puruṣa* hath entered? What things hath *Puruṣa* contained within Him?

This riddle we propound to thee, O Brahman. Why dost thou give no answer to my question?

WITHIN FIVE THINGS HATH PURUṢA FOUND ENTRANCE. *THERE PURUṢA HATH WITHIN HIMSELF* CONNECTED. THIS IS THE THOUGHT WHICH I RETURN IN ANSWER."

The commentator says the five things within which the Puruṣa has found entrance are the five breaths. It is more likely that they are the five planes of matter, breath, mind, supermind (*annam, prāṇam, manas, vijñānam*) and *ātma* (*jīva*). Puruṣa here means Viṣṇu, the three-strided one, who has encompassed the *bhuh, bhuvah* and *svah* and has

Mystic thought has always accepted the view that it is the Divine who is the doer of everything ultimately and the enjoyer of all results. The usual view that there are four causes for every thing, the material, the efficient, the instrumental, accessory and teleological, is accepted. There is also another view which lays emphasis on the cause as *asādhārana* (the specific and non-general) rather than the general (*sādhārana*). The spiritual view ultimately passes from the particular causes to the general causes of all, which are said to be time, space and God. Since space and time are also under special circumstances very much particularised with regard to events, God alone becomes the most general cause of all things, indispensable for all activity. Ignorant men brush aside God as cause and devote themselves to discover the other specific causes. In mystic attainment one concentrates on the general and proceeds to explain all on the basis of the nature of that General Cause or God.

It is thus very necessary to devote one's attention to this Most Universal Cause which is the Cause of all causes.

The *Tiruvāśarīyam* teaches within the brief compass of seven hymns the *Tattva* (nature), the *Hita* (the Good) and the *Puruṣārtha* (the goal and ideal of man) as well as the obstacles to the final attainment of the knowledge of the Universal cause of all things.

In the opening hymn of the *Tiruvāśarīyam* the nature

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become the Master of all the worlds by pervasion. Outwardly the three, inwardly the five, He has pervaded as the indwelling Lord. The word Puruṣa is significantly a reference to the indwelling Selfness of God in all.

The Ālvārs all wonder at the greatest exploit of Viṣṇu, which makes Him the all-pervading Sovereign of all things and souls and gods; all other powers of God are subordinated to this Ruler-ship principle of Viṣṇu.

of God is explained with all the mythological mysticism inbuilt in the *Veda:*

> "Like the lustrous emerald-green mountain with huge red-clouds, crimson Sun, cool-Moon adorned and wearing many stars with coral red reefs asleep on the palm of the Ocean's lord, Thou art wrapt in yellow robe, adorned with crown and necklace, and bright jewels, bright-lipped and red-eyed, with an entrancing body resting on the couch-like serpent, poisonous and brooding. In the midst of the Ocean enjoyest Thou yoga-sleep, so that Śiva, Brahma, Indra and other hosts of gods may worship Thee! O Thou lotus-navelled One! Supreme Godhead! O Thou who hast feet that measured the three-worlds!"

The second hymn reveals the superb difference between this divine ecstatic Vision of the fivefold Godhead and the pleasures of the mundane world and heavens and attainments of the different world enjoyments (*siddhis*).

> "Through its intense desire to wear on its head the signs of the Lord's Sovereignty, the Soul struggles to attain the feet of the Lord (Viṣṇu Trivikrama) resounding with bangles, who is the world-creator-devourer; abandoning puerile ends, it melts and loses itself in devotion and love to Him in that delight of enjoying the transcendent nectar-flood. Let it. If lordship, established place and imperishable strength over the three worlds be got but without getting liberation, will knowers aim at that?"

Man's goal is liberation, not the sovereignty of the worlds. This cannot be got unless one wears the feet

of the Supreme Sovereign on one's head, in sheer loving, melting devotion. The wearing of the feet of God shows the dependence on God for liberation. That is why the feet of God are to be worn by all devotees of God. It is not so much a caste-mark as a mark of devotion to the Ultimate Personality that rules all the worlds.

The third hymn points out that the offering of oneself to God involves also the devoted and consecrated service of the lovers and servants of God. That too is the next step in the sacrifice:

> "Because of whose will the three worlds tread the good path is He famed as Sole Refuge, Who destines all to be true, Who among the three gods is chief, Whose chest is luminous, Who in the cool ocean full of high waves that roar like thunder-bolts at which the mountains quake, bound a serpent king round the huge mountain and churned (nectar), to That One Supreme God's devotees we shall become servants, hereafter, creation after creation."

The Lord grants immortality, it is true. The churning of the immortal elixir is a figure of sacrifice, and is assisted throughout by Viṣṇu as supporter, executor, as saviour and giver. The beauty of God lies in the fact that He could simultaneously manifest Himself in manifold forms and execute diverse functions in the most perfect way true to His divine nature. The worship of the devotees (*aḍiyārs*) of the feet of God is also necessary. It reveals that the true nature of the soul is humility, a creatureliness which is the realisation of one's nothingness without God. Thus the true *akincanata* (nothingness-nature) of the soul should be exhibited in one's conduct with reference to all the devotees of God's feet or who

wear the feet of God all the time and incessantly seek to serve them.

Though the service of the servants of God, devotees of the Lord, is quite necessary for promoting one's own utter humility and nothingness, yet the goal is God alone and not these servants, for God alone is the 'I' or self of all. It is refuge at His feet that grants felicity.

> "Will it not come to pass that creation and after creation unceasingly undisturbed we shall seek refuge at the feet of the Primeval Divine Wonderful Being? Who once upon a time, when all the worlds were hot and all the worlds and all beings ceased to be, was unattainable by countless souls; Then unaided, the Sole Seed, out of His navel He brought forth the supremely powerful Brahma, Īśa and other Gods and willed the existence of the three worlds?"

Thus not all the *bhāgavatas* put together can become equal to God. Their powers are God-limited, because God-granted. Even a community of such devout souls cannot equal God, though God may Himself state that they are His self and that He is willing to do all that they want. It is necessary to transcend this world of devotees and enter the ontological *prius*, God Himself, who is the creator of all and the source of all. Nothing else can be a substitute for God, however eminent the teacher or messenger. God is the primeval *ācārya*, the One *Ṛṣi* so to speak, who alone leads one to Himself ultimately. All *bhāgavatas* or God-filled souls are but mediators in this process, who try to bring the soul to their Lord God.

The fifth hymn shows that God alone contains all and no soul can ever aspire to reveal this in itself. *Viśva-rūpa-darśana* or the Vision of the World-compre-

hending Form of God is described in a beautiful concentrated manner.

> Making Thy one lotus-foot face downwards covering the Earth entire, O Thou Primordial Cause! with the other brilliant lotus-foot hast Thou covered the entire Sky, so that the Brahma's world felt wonder and joy and the gods the path shown by the Veda tread! With eyes like the lotus-garden in bloom, with lips like fruit, wearing a crown, lustrous like the Dawn or an infinite-rayed thousand Sun, Thou art with a thousand shoulders like the Kalpaka Forest (that grantest all)! To Thee canst not the worlds be devoted slaves? O Lord!

Mahābali, an Asura emperor, descendant of Prahlāda, who was a devout *bhāgavata* of Viṣṇu, ascended the imperial throne, and, as was the custom, conquered all the three worlds. He then performed a great sacrifice (*yajña*) in which he wished to give everything asked for by any seeker as *dāna* (gift), after the conclusion of the sacrifice. The great *Kratu* or sacrifice excelled everything, and the great king was almost completing his sacrifice to attain the entire universe. Just then the gods appealed to Viṣṇu to save the universe from the rule of the Asura. Since this ruler was the grand-son of His Devotee Prahlāda, Viṣṇu took up the role of a humble divine Brahmin of puny stature (Vāmana) and reaching the sacrificial ground of the great emperor requested him to give him the gift of just as much land as he could measure with his three strides. Though Śukra, the Asura's chief priest, counselled otherwise, suspecting Viṣṇu's intention, the Asura king gave the three strides of land asked for as gift according to his original resolu-

tion at the beginning of the performance of the sacrifice. Vāmana then assumed the vast infinite form encompassing the whole universe and measured all the three worlds in two strides and is said to have asked for the space for his third stride. The Asura emperor without hesitation offered his own crowned head and thus realised his highest ambition of becoming the servant of God, which indeed means his attainment of his own chosen goal of liberation and sovereignty. God Himself came to fulfil and complete the sacrifice of Mahābali, and thus the story has an immense moral. Even the Asura gains the celestial Divine world of Viṣṇu when he is adorned with the feet of God. How much more then when we do it in the spirit of utter dedication? God is not a vengeful deity but a saving deity. It is His tender grace which reveals the fullness of His love for all His creatures. Whoever is in the right, by Him does the Divine stand. Śathakopa represents the feet of God as lotuses, His eyes are like lotuses in bloom, indicating His wonderful tenderness and love and purity; the allusion to the Kalpaka tree reveals how He dowers every one with His boons. The God who receives but three paces, grants thousand-fold beneficence to one and all. He has become the Sovereign Ruler of all.

Having thus sung about the nature of God (*tattva*) as Causal Source, and as the ideal for man, Śathakopa next mentions the obstacles to the attainment of union with such a deity. Ultimate Godhead alone must be worshipped for not all gods are the cause of the Universe. It is only the supreme Cause of the Universe who can grant liberation. The weakness of mankind is in assuming that anybody with a show of some power can also be a guide, saviour and liberator.

> "Alas! Man's nature is this: to adore the wooden doll whilst the mother who brought him forth is before him! Whilst the God who brought forth the world, raised it, created it out of Himself, measured it, muses on it and saves it, exists, to worship some gods one has seen reveals one's stupidity that causes pain to the knowers: their services to lesser gods leads to causing pain (*himsa*) and other prohibited works. The fruits granted by them too are joys mixed with grief. They become the causes of complete submergence, unceasing, in the beginningless vast deluding *samsāra*, through manifold deluding things of sense."

The Divine Godhead is for all to see and recognize and follow, through life, through death, through eternity.

The seventh and final hymn makes the stern and integral determination to worship the Supreme Godhead alone and not the lesser gods, who are all in one sense finite godheads or gods in struggle with forces beyond their powers. The great truth that is to be clearly learnt in spiritual life is that God must be perfect and His history cannot be a history of struggle with all the concomitants of casualty of truth, goodness, perfection and non-violence and love. The descriptions given of the behaviour of the gods by some Tāmasic Purāṇas are things which the Sāttvic Śathakopa could never accept. The discussion about the gods is generally out of the purview of true religion, and is the hunting ground of sectarians and ignorant fanatics tied up in admiration to one aspect of deity or its manifestation. Śathakopa following the great *Ṛṣis* insists on the recognition of True godhead as the Source of all creation and sustenance and as one who

has the absolute and sole power to grant refuge to one and all, gods, men and animals and every creature at whatever level of evolution or existence. Indeed the Supreme Godhead is the refuge of all, and therefore are they all found in His Cosmic Body:

> "He upholds Rudra who wears the moon on his matted locks, Brahma the four-faced, Indra the chief of the gods! Having the colour of green leaf, He upholds all the worlds including the earth with all its creatures and all the elements, water, fire, air and light-pervaded ether, the brilliant Sun and Moon with their rays. All are kept without falling asunder through His Power, within Himself, so that they are not seen (in *pralaya*). It is He, who is resting on the banyan leaf (in the Ocean at Cosmic Withdrawal). Him, our Lord, the Great God of *Māyā* alone, and no other God shall we adore!"

The great *Māyā* of God is revealed to Mārkandeya in the *Bhāgavata* story as the total containment of all in God—*sarvam samāpnosi tatosi sarvah.* All things ultimately attain rest in Him and that is why He who is the refuge of all, *Narāṇām ayanam*—the rest-house of all seekers after supreme felicity—is the Lord of all the worlds and supremely fit to be our adorable object of love and union. This is the reply, so to speak, to that great question of the *Veda: Kasmai devāya haviṣo vidhema?* "To Which God should we offer Oblation?" (R.V. X. 121-1 ff). It is to Nārāyaṇa, Who is the Lord of *Māyā,* Who is the goal of all beings, gods and men and all alike, Nature and everything, and Whom worshipping in different ways birth after birth, age after age, we reach in the fullness of our knowledge and devotion, having

become capable of discernment of the Object of our very endeavours and strivings after all types of *Puruṣārthas* like happiness and so on. Thus like a *jñāni* who after many lives reaches the feet of God knowing it to be the only refuge for all, Śathakopa concludes his great hymn with the all-containing Godhead as the content of His Vision.

PERIYA TIRUVANDADI

Periya Tiruvandādi, the large andādi composition, is distinguished from the three *andādis* of the first three *Āḻvārs* by being called big andādi. It consists of only 87 verses. The purpose of this composition is to instruct the mind to worship the Greatness of God. It is intended to make the mind attain to its *svarūpa-jñāna*, knowledge of its own true nature, and make it bathe fully in the flowing waters of Divine Goodness. The mind always is moving, like a bee, from object to object; being thus always moving, one must give it not a static object but a moving object for pursuit. The Greatness of God is always a dynamic factor and, since it is also infinite, the mind feels at home in this infinity by moving from one quality to another. One of the greatest discoveries of the Āḻvārs is their granting to the mind an object suited to its nature. Though the mind has been compared to a monkey that is stung by a scorpion and drunk with toddy, yet this is in respect of objects of sense; to substitute for these objects a dynamic variegated infinity of God's Greatness, (as seen in His history of descents) is the simplest and appropriate way of controlling it, channelling it. This is the *pratipaksabhāvana* (of the *Yoga Sūtras*) counselled by it.

This bath by the mind in the Waters of Divine Infinity (*avagāhasnāna*) purifies it. If we consider the sug-

gestion that this work corresponds to the *Atharvaṇa Veda* containing several remedial *mantras* which help to overcome the diseases of the body and mind, then this composition seeks to do the same thing by giving it a cleaning in the Waters of Divine Infinity and Greatness.

Constant remembrance of God's infinity of glories grants a suitable concentration, that is, dynamic movement leading to the transformation of the mind itself. The usual technique of controlling the mind by arresting its movement is about the least natural of all efforts. In the process of its appreciation, admiration and wonder of the Divine Infinity the mind indeed becomes different in its operational capacity and discovers its powers growing vast in perception and pleasure or delight.

The *Tiruvandādi* also mentions another quality that is developed in the mind. One can enjoy the glory of God, have divine vision also, and continuing happiness, in this terrestrial life itself. Man verily becomes an object of other souls when he becomes like unto a flower. In one important verse Śathakopa mentions that in all flowers he perceived God. Does not the flower symbolise for us the supreme fulfilment of a deep aspiration of an innocent sown in the mire of being which thirsting towards divine beauty reveals its own full blossom and offers it to God in the open skies? Man should become a flower, or a bird with golden wings, the vehicle of God and as an offering to god. No wonder the earliest Āḻvārs and Godā were said to have been born of flowers and plants, and the Āḻvārs offered garlands of flowers to God; flower and cocoanut symbolised spiritual offerings of one's present and the future to God alone.

The first verse begins with the soul's inability to grasp the glory of God. Śathakopa says: "If I speak

about the Supreme, I would have really belittled His greatness. If I did not praise Him, then too I would not have done the right thing. If we did think of Him we would have stepped Him down. If we did not think of Him then too we would have done it. O Lord (we are in a dilemma)! Do not get angry with us. It is our delusion due to terrible sin that makes us praise Thee or not praise Thee."

The greatness of God is incomparable, inexpressible by the language that we now know. Thus our present instruments of knowledge, eyes, ears and mind return from it incapable of knowing. Our reason tied to these organs is also incapable of proving Him. Such is God's transcendence. We do not flatter God for any benefits. Praise is thus our recognition of the power of God to help us and this too is incomparable (*upamāna rahita*). "If it is in one sense impossible to praise God intelligibly, it is equally true that it is impossible for the devout soul in wonder to stop praising Him. This praising or lauding of God is not something dependent upon my volition. It is independent of me," cries Śathakopa (v. 3). "My mind has become Thy slave, Divine Lord!" (v. 4). "In one sense I am greater than others whose senses are slaves of objects of pleasure, imperfect, transient."

God is described as father, mother and teacher. "Thou art the mother who brought me forth. Thou art the father who gave birth to me. Thou art the bestower of knowledge to me. Thou alone art all to me. Thus art Thou a triple God to me" (v. 5). "Thou brought me forth, Why? Is it not for granting refuge to me from my sins?" (v. 6). Thus the greatness of God lies in His getting rid of our sins; and in this too He is incomparable.

Perhaps it is not even that. "It is to make me love

Thee, and to desire Thee only." The Divine has been described as the Most Desirable, and, as Kāma, He puts every one into unquenchable desire. "Desire desires Thee," cries out the Āḻvār. "My mind has become Thy devotee and near to Thee. But we are afar being sinful. Desire having the mind as vehicle has already attained Thee. But between this attainment by desire of Thee and my attainment of Thee there seems to be a gap. Hence this distress of my mind. However one thing is certain. There is no use in being the servants of other gods except Thou who art the Goal of all. Other than the eight (Vasus), the eleven (Rudras), the twelve (Ādityas) and the two (Aśvins), who are we to the Lord of Śrī? What is (our) refuge worth? Our sins are terrible, O Mind. Yet have we boldness!" (v. 10). Nearness of God is achieved not even by great desire, but by the renunciation of our egoity, our *kincanata,* of being somebody. "By becoming the servants of God we have become as it were His sacred sandals" (v. 31). Surrender to God, which means the subordination of oneself to God, makes God come closer and nearer to the soul (v. 33).

The experience of God is different from other experiences. It is unique. One should develop that discrimination which seizes upon this divine experience and rejects others. Thus he says:

> "Knowing the experience of the Divine Lord is quite different, if we seek to go to that world where the eternal souls (ever free) reside, it is not a difficult thing. If you desire it you can enjoy that even here on Earth. O Mind, who are devoted to the Lord renouncing these enjoyments (of the world of eternal souls both there and here), devote yourself to the praise of Kṛṣṇa's feet alone" (v. 67).

Thus in a sense *jīvanmukti* is possible here itself. The Lord indwelling in the heart of the devotee will make all sins fall away or become extinct.

> "The Supreme Lord, blue-hued, who has entered into my heart will never leave me. But that Vaikuntha space which intimates *Śeṣācalam*, the Milk Ocean, has lost importance" (v. 68). "What can sins do except become fierce with red rage? But who can trouble me who has the Lord of all, the auspicious ocean of excellent qualities, within my heart?" (v. 69).

Sin gets entirely uprooted wherever the Divine actually resides for He is *apahatapāpma*. But He must enter into one's heart. This entry into the heart of the seeker, servant of God, is also described:

> "The earth and the expansive sky exist in Thee. Thou art residing in my heart, having entered into me through my ears" (v. 75).

Immediately after the entry of God into one's heart through the ear follows the magnificent declaration:

> "As between us, O Lord! I am the greater who knows about Thy greatness" (v. 75).

By contemplating on the Lord, a deep abiding ecstasy of calm possesses one's mind.

> "By contemplating on Thee my mind becomes athrill. By the look of Thine which removes all sins and makes me see Thee, I shall be able to be in all the worlds where Thou art. O Lord who pervadest all worlds! Do tell me whether it is not so?"

This reveals that the individual soul by the grace of God can be wherever the Divine is. Its consciousness expands to infinity and becomes co-extensive with that

of God. There is infinitisation of the finite in respect of its freedom to move into all the worlds of God.

Thus the *Periya Tiruvandādi* shows that through God's grace, which is got through sincerest surrender in all respects, the Divine purifies the soul and its mind and grants it approach to Himself and finally infinitises it by a mere look. God is the great doctor of the soul, the means to its growth and perfection.

God can be enjoyed in all the worlds equally. While the approach in the *Tiruviruttam* and the *Tiruvāymoḷi* is feminine, in the two compositions *Tiruvāśarīyam* and *Periya Tiruvandādi* the approach is that of servant and slave and Śathakopa shows how in either case one is granted supreme felicity and liberation.

TIRUVAYMOLI

St. Śathakopa's most important composition is undoubtedly the Tiruvāymoḷi (the divine speech). This work is also known as *Bhagavad viṣaya*—that which relates entirely to the singing of the glorious attributes of God. The enjoyment of these unfathomable depths of God's infinite nature was vouchsafed to this divine saint and singer of bliss. So much so some of the greatest devotees of God have used these hymns for blissful remembrance of God.

The work consists of 1,102 stanzas. As it is an experience of the Vision of God, it is not a discourse but a disclosure of God's nature. It is direct, unmediated by sense; a spiritual intuition comparable to revelational knowledge.

These have been sung in the temples and were arranged for the purpose of continuous meditation. Śrī Rāmānuja following the instruction of his grandsire Yāmunācārya had a commentary written on this great work.

It was written by Pillan of Tirukurukkai. It was followed by other extensive commentaries, the most famous being called the *Īdu*. Another work giving the essence of the teaching contained in the above work, known as *Ācārya-hṛdaya*, is also a work which guides the manner of enjoyment of this work.

Professor P.N. Srinivasacharya* says: "Nammāḻvār's mysticism is a perfect illustration of the view that the best proof of God is the direct intuitive experience of God." The mysticism of this great seer and founder of the path of self-surrender is one of the most glorious chapters in South Indian mysticism. The path of self-surrender is at once the most easy and most direct towards the attainment of the experience of God. It is also the only path ultimately. There is no other path (*nānyaḥ panthā*) to God except through dedicated surrender.

The opening stanzas of this exquisite composition sum up the whole mystic vision.

> "The abode of bliss that destroyest all fatigue, the abode of knowledge that annuls all ignorance, the lord of all gods eternals who have conquered all sloth, His sorrow-dispelling feet do thou seek for refuge" (I. 1.2). "He is my life; He is immeasurable by the mind even when that hath cleansed the dirt of itself. He Who is beyond the grasp of the senses, He is the Lord, omniscient and bliss, having neither equal nor superior in the past, present and future" (I. 1.2). "He is not: He is. Thus it is impossible to speak of Him, Who has pierced the earth and the sky and has become the inner ruler in all. He is unaffected by defects. He is in all without intermission.

* *Mystics and Mysticism*, p. 180-183, Sri Krishna Library, 1951, Madras.

He is the abode of bliss. Such a person have I attained" (I. 1.3). "All is He—that which is called that, this and that between (mid-thing). That man, this man, mid-man, that woman, this woman, mid-woman, what is that, what is this and what is in between, those, these and things in between, good and bad, past things, present things and future—all is He" (I. 1.4). "Each person due to differences in his quality of knowledge worshipping different gods as his God, attains their feet. They verily are capable of granting their wishes. But it is verily the Supreme Lord dwelling in all these gods who grantest the prayers (of all their devotees)" (I. 1.5). "Though the things which are sitting, lying down, and moving and those which are not cannot be said to be unchanging at all times, the Lord is at all times the one self-identical Being in all these" (I. 1.6). "He is the material cause of all ākāśa, (ether), air, fire, water and earth, pervading all these like the soul its body. He is the Shining One in all. The scriptures intimate Him to be the lord of Śrī, and as having contained all these elements in Himself during the period of deluge" (I. 1.7). "He is the inner Lord of all; whether said to be existent or non-existent, He is. Possessing both the existent and the non-existent within Him, He pervading all as self is the Total Being. Pervading all He is yet their destroyer and as such He is the eternally permanent Being" (I. 1.8).

In these stanzas He speaks of the most important truths of mystic vision. God is One only. He is the

material cause as well as the efficient cause and the final cause of all life and being. He is permanent among the impermanent and the changing. In all states He remains the Lord. He can grant all the wishes of the seeker after His feet and indeed He it is who grants even the wishes of the gods who get every thing from Him alone. The means to attain Him is to seek refuge at His feet *(saraṇāgati)*. The supreme principle of surrender of oneself to God for the sake of getting freed from sin is enunciated firmly by counselling that God is the Self of all elements which are to be deemed to be His body.

As he himself remarks, all things *(idam sarvam)* must be thought of as sheaths *(porai)* of God even as the *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad* states. All this is verily He, echoes the cardinal mystic doctrine: *sarvam khalvidam brahma* (all this is verily Brahman alone).

In the second ten verses in sharp small sentences he urges the path of surrender:

> "Give up all things with their attachments. Giving up thus surrender to the Lord who liberates. Consider thou awhile: the bodies that the souls wear are not more permanent than lightning. Attain the Lord rooting out all feeling of mine and I. For the souls there is no other higher than He. God's nature is neither like the souls nor like Nature. Illimitable Bliss is His nature. Renouncing all others seek thou Him. Freed from the bondage to the inconscient, the soul achieves freedom. If thou wouldst seek the transcendent Godhead giving up this self-realisation seek thou the Supreme Lord giving up the others. The Lord is all, impartial, having no attachment. Participate thou in all kinds of

works of that Supeme Lord without any attachment.

Do thou enter into that supreme wealth of all knowing all, that these are for His excellence. Discerning the utility of mind, speech and body, suppressing their outward movements, dedicate them to the apprehension of God's Nature.

When the sense-organs are diverted to God-experience, their limitations fall away. Await thou the destruction of the body for the experience of the Utter Transcendent. Seek thou the feet of Nārāyaṇa, having bliss that exceeds all measure, having the form of light soul-substance and having unlimited auspicious qualities."

In the above is clearly enunciated the need for one to seek refuge of God. Integral surrender is also counselled for attaining the Vision of God and the experience of God is even greater than the experience of freedom of the individual self called self-realisation.

As already stated, the Āḻvārs did have the conception of God in five-fold ways as the *Para* (transcendent) form which all have to attain for integral experience as well as freedom from birth into ignorance and misery, as *vyūha* (creator etc.), as *vibhava* (*avatāra* or manifestation in the terrestrial scheme), as *arca* (icon), and as the inner ruler within the hearts of all and of oneself (*antaryāmin*). St. Śathakopa in the next hymns speaks about the accessibility of God as *vibhava (avatāra)*.

"Such is our Lord difficult to reach. To the devoted attainable with ease, to the undevoted unattainable is He. Easy of access is He who has made many descents without any

limitation or any restriction of place. By none can my Lord be known having any one nature. By none can my Lord be known as having any one form. Having all names and forms innumerable, Lord has neither one name nor one form. But to declare that He has them not, leads to controversy" (I.3.4).

The mystic attains the peace of mind which is of transcendental quality. His mind becomes cleansed of the gross desires and wishes. His aim is the Ultimate, and perforce he is to tread the path of ascent. The Āḻvārs knew that one has to ascend by the well-laid-down path of *arca* (iconic worship) and the *antaryāmi* realisation (God resident in one's heart) and then being thus purified in both service of God and meditation on God one begins to see that the loving contemplation on the Glories of God is facilitated by the historical role that God had made. The mind moves to the perception of God through His activities *(līlā)* and this is rendered wonderfully by the Āḻvār. The messages that the soul sends in the form of prayers and supplication is a motif of great merit. The deep moods of love and absorption are wonderfully portrayed.

The mystic realisation that God loves the soul as much as the soul craves for union with God is sung in the following verse:

> "In my mind I have not thought of keeping Him out of my mind. He Himself out of love conquered my mind, wilful though it is, and has entered into me residing within my body and has inseparably united with it. Such a Person, will He bear to be apart from me? (I.7.9)

St. Śathakopa again and again speaks of God's con-

stant presence with him. He is established in all quarters of me, says the saint.

> "He who pervades all and is the sole cause of all ambrosia mine, is established in all quarters of me" (I.9.1)
>
> "He who is capable of making many descents, the creator of all, Who as Varāha brought out of the ocean the earth.....Whose greatness cannot be conceived even by the gods, is near me."

In the mystic vision of the Āḻvārs as a rule, and most so in the Vision of St. Śathakopa, the quintuple status of God or five forms of God are simultaneously presented. They could not be separated from the Vision of the Whole Person of God.

> "Deathless, endless, measureless, auspicious, cause of gods, primal being of blue-gem hue and red-lotus eyes, riding delightfully on the beautiful celestial bird, Husband of the daughter of the lotus, being with me, granting me enjoyment in a unique way, stays with me" (I.9.3).

Or again,

> "There are three worlds which thine three spouses Śrī, Bhū and the well-plaited Nīla protect. My wonderful Lord, greater than the ocean, O Kanna! who had simultaneously eaten up these (worlds) and lay down on the fig-leaf, is verily seated now in my mid-region (heart)" (I.9.4).

God is shown to reside in every part of the individual saint. He is said to reside on the shoulders, on the tongue, in the eyes, and in the face and head in the following stanzas. The mystic Āḻvār speaks of his union with God as like the combination of honey and ghee in nectar.

The Āḻvār recounts in the third person the experiences that take place as he proceeds towards the higher experiences. Again and again there occur similar situations but at higher levels of consciousness and the guide of the soul, or the *guru*, communicates the condition of the soul in respect of its aspiration for the sole experience of God. The whole mystical experience of ascent seems to follow a particular pattern. There is the first lightning vision of the Ultimate condition or God-experience. The mind of the seeker is filled with this vision. The feelings of nearness of God and even possession by God of the entire being, physical, vital, and mental of the soul make it feel the ecstatic contact within which it seeks to lose its consciousness. Awaking again to the normal condition there is the urge to seek an inseparable union with God in all one's parts, to be filled both inside and outside by His presence and personality. The motif is usually expressed through the conception of the soul as the mystic bride seeking the Divine Godhead as the bridegroom.

The attainment of the Divine Vision in the highest abode is sung in soul-filling terms in the hymns. But as always the form of God *(svarūpa)* is described whether in the highest abode or in the temples.

> "In the supreme abode my Lord Who has attained my soul out of love shines with a beautiful garland, crown, conch and discus, holy thread and necklace. His eyes are red lotus ponds. His lips are like a red lotus. His feet are red lotuses. The whole form of my Lord is red-golden" (II.v.1).

Refuge at the feet of God is something that is granted by God Himself out of grace. Man has only to place

himself at the feet of God, singing the songs of His glory. The Āḻvār undoubtedly considers that the servant-hood or slave-hood of God is an invaluable aid to liberation from the round of births.

> "Being born birth after birth and attaining Thy feet, getting certitude, I have bathed in the Ocean of limitless bliss. Pray do thou abide in me without separation" (II.6.8).

The names of God are used for constant remembrance in meditation. Each name seems to intimate a profound quality and function of God in relation to the creatures:

> "Lying, indwelling, standing measuring the worlds, entering below (the earth), and uplifting the same, hiding and revealing, with His vast arms He has embraced the Lady of the Earth (Bhūdevī). Who can ever measure God's love? Who can know my Lord Kṛṣṇa. Speaking of food all the worlds will not form one morsel. The seat of liberation is very high above. He is the Self of all things not leaving out even the least places. He is everywhere present" (II.8.7 & 8).

The Āḻvār's enjoyment of the Divine is continuous and sometimes direct vision is spoken of and at other times there is the communication of the vision to his own reflective consciousness.

The poetic beauty of his Vision has been appreciated by almost all the poets of the Tamil language. But it is not because of its poetic charm that St. Śathakopa has to be studied. It is the quality of Vision that matters. The world must reveal the beauty of God and must be studied in relation to the transcendent beauty. This is the transcendental quality or the real quality of aesthetic

fulfilment that makes the most ordinary things of life take on the beauty of the eternal and the universal. The concrete individualisation of the universal is about the most successful efforts of great art and poetry.

St. Śathakopa in his famous hymn (III.1.1) speaks about the effulgence of God as he saw it:

> "Has the effulgence of Thine face expanded as the effulgence of Thine crown? Has the effulgence of Thine feet pervaded Thine lotus-seat? Has the effulgence of Thine waist mixed with the effulgence of Thine yellow garment and ornaments? O My Lord, Speak Thou? O Māl, Supremest Light speaking truly the lotus is not equal to Thine eyes or feet or hands. Even the purified (burnished) gold cannot equal the effulgence of Thine divine body. To praise Thee with analogies drawn from the world being mere words will express faults alone" (III.1.2).

Such is the mystic light which sheds light on all but on which nothing can shed light. The mystic vision throws into one supreme focus the transcendental nature and being which is shown to be the cause of all the terrestrial and the immanent. The organic relation between the transcendent and the immanent is such that the transcendent seems to supply all potentialities and possibilities to the immanent. Similarity between the two is possible because of this interfusion of the transcendent and the immanent, the Whole and the finite, the Infinite and the infinitesimal, the outward and the inward. Mystic Vision is unique in this composition of all in its area. The beauty of God is clearly spiritual beauty and the yearning for the vision of beauty on the part of the soul is a mystic yearning for union, fulfilment and that which

grants the realisation of one's own completion in God. The power and love of God being spiritual and supreme, the dedication of oneself to His service and love will bring about the union of God and the soul, and also bring down the supreme felicity even on this world.

The destiny or goal of the human individual is the realisation of union with God in all patterns and relationships. It also takes the forms of *bhakti* or devotion through prayer, song and continuous service of God in some one way or other. Whatever a man's or soul's condition may be there is a way of service naturally open to him or it and therefore no one can say that he cannot do any service to God. Surrender becomes natural when weakness and inability supervene and the supreme Lord hastens to make the activities of the soul possible and fruitful.

A new age of spirituality was envisioned by St. Śathakopa. That age was to be the age of God-love when God gives Himself up to man because man has given himself up to God, and it is the technique of yoga or union through love that St. Śathakopa describes and delineates through revealing his own practice.

He sees the lovers of God moving about carrying the message of grace to one and all, over the land.

> "Let everything overflow and overflow being full and overflow. We have seen the devotees of the Lord freely moving about on this Earth singing and dancing. The sins that torment souls have been liquidated. The hell itself has gone to pieces. There is no work for the God of Death in this world. Even Kali has gone. Everything is full, abundant, overflowing. We have seen, we have seen, we have seen that which is pleas-

ing to the eyes! The devotees of Mādhava are moving about on the Earth filling it with song and dance" (v.2.1 & 2).

The Āḻvār sings about the evanescence of all kingdoms and wealth, and counsels the worship of the permanent so that one may attain the permanent state from which there is no fall. This in the view of the religious and the mystical schools is nothing other than God Himself.

> "In our own life-times have we seen kings who ruled ruthlessly their subjects and collected taxes in the period of their lives running away to forests abandoning their wives and children, derided by their enemies. Therefore seek ye the refuge at the feet of God" (IV.1.2).

God is like the fragrance of sandal-incense, attracting the soul to Him.

There are many hymns devoted to describing the process of creation. They are mystical in the extreme and the Āḻvār again and again reveals how the Godhead had brought out of Himself all the worlds out of His own will and for His own enjoyment.

The Āḻvār describes how he had been able to see all the several forms* manifested in creation:

> "One form Thou hast become two forms, and then three and then many forms and the five elements and the two lights. Remaining subtle (as Self of all), after creating all, Thou hast re-

* Commentators refer the one form to *avyakta* which is the body (form) of God, and it becomes two (*prakṛti* and *mahat*), and then three (*prakṛti, mahat, ahamkāra*), with its three kinds. All are the body of God, as *viśva,* and all have come out of God Who keeps them all as subtle and as gross in the unmanifest and manifest condition, as their Self.

turned to Thy serpent-bed in the Ocean to rest. O Narayana, My mind having devoured Thy form wholly is freed from sorrow" (IV.3.3).

The psychological technique in the *Tiruvāymoḷi* is one of concentric meditation. The Āḻvār experiences the Divine Form of God and is lost in ecstasy over the grace of God that has been his lot. But after the experience of this condition, there is almost a relapse into a condition of having lost touch and intimacy with the divine form. This leads to the experience of loneliness, and drives him to God-madness which leads to deep and intense love of God in all conditions. The Āḻvār experiences the presence of God or intimations of His presence in everything. He sees everything as belonging to Him, in other words, the mystic sense reveals all to be intimately supported by God and manifesting His presence by some natural sign common to God and the object: mythological mysticism overpowers this experience of God-possession of all things. Everything is the body of God, and all have God as their self or determiner.

> "Touching the ground she cries out it is Vāmana's earth. Saluting the heavens she cries out it is Vaikuṇṭha. She points to her tears and says it is the Ocean of God. Thou hast made her God-mad" (IV.4.1).

And so

> "Showing the sun she says He is the body of Śrīdhara. Embracing the blazing fire she cries out that the God will not leave her. Her body does not burn!" (IV.4.2).
>
> "Pointing to the Full Moon she cries out that her God is crystal bright. Pointing to the Mountain she cries out that her God is tall. Pointing

> to the rain she says that that is the residence of Nārāyaṇa. Embracing calves she says that they are Kṛṣṇa's calves. Walking towards serpents she says they are the bed of God."

Everything belongs to God, is indwelt by Him and reveals His presence to the mystic vision of the poetic lover.

Though this vision is poetic analogy in most cases, tending towards the suggestion of the Divine presence in all things associated with God, the individual soul seeks to have the vision of the Godhead even in a physical sense.

> "Unceasingly in my heart art Thou dwelling and in my soul and in my senses: Though knowing Thee as such and beyond the reach of the senses, yet am I again and again trying to see Thee, being ignorant, alas!"

The knowing and seeing of God and placing God in the heart lead to the abolition of all diseases and destruction of all ignorance.

An illumination of the entire world of God within oneself is shown to occur when one calls to God out of love.

> "When I called Him as my nectar, my honey, He came effulgently of His own accord. Now the sky, the earth, the eternal worlds and all these are in my heart" (V.i.2).

This is so because all are His bodies, bodies of the one God (V.2.7). The glories of mystic experiences comparable to that of the Vedic seer Vāmadeva certainly are mentioned in the *Tiruvāymoḷi* after the Āḻvār's experience of the worlds and all as the body of God (*śarīra-bhūta*).

'I am Rudra, I am Brahma, I am Indra, I am Manu, she cries out. Is she not possessed by the Supreme Lord who is the Self of all?" (V.6 1-8).

This is the mystic identity that is expressive of the supreme possession of the highest identity-vision. The Āḻvār speaks of God becoming oneself.

"He became me out of His own accord" (VIII.8.3).

"He is shining within my heart" (VIII.7).

"He has taken residence in my mind" (VIII.6.5).

"Coming as if to grant me my wishes Thou hast entered into both my mind and soul and entranced them" (IX.6.5).

"Wishing as if to make me a poet, the Lord has entered my body, mind and soul without any one knowing about it and having fully enjoyed both (body and soul) He has become full. Thus has He become me" (X.7.1).

The enjoyment by God of the body and the soul of the individual it is that makes for the individual soul getting full pervasion without remainder by God's grace and force.

"Having enjoyed me (pervaded me) fully both in my body and soul, He has become my intellect and all (organs). He has begun singing about Himself (through me)—He who is my honey, my milk and my sugar! He who is residing in *Tirumāl-irum-śolai*" (X.7.2).

"He will not move out of my sight. He who is subtle (invisible) has now firmly entered my love in deepest love" (X.8.8).

The mystic identity is realised through this total pervasion of the Divine effulgence in oneself and also His presence is something that makes for total freedom. The devotees, God-filled in this manner, are said to be led to the highest abode (Vaikuṇṭha) *(paramapada)* as fit to dwell in that highest seat of God. Gods themselves welcome man of such divine experiences. It is the destiny of all devoted souls (X.9).

Concluding, it can be said that St. Śathakopa in his *Bhagavadviṣaya (Tiruvāymoḻi)* has delineated the course of the spiritual mystical approach in all its various forms. He has epitomised the experiences of the other Āḻvārs in the several levels of experience of God, as the Ultimate person beyond all sense knowledge and rational knowledge. He has represented his own experiences as revealing God as the eternal personality having fully exemplified in Him the mythico-history that the *Purāṇas, Itihāsas* and the Vedic seers have represented. He is the Mystical Highest as well as the Philosophical Absolute, and the Creator of all. He is the indwelling identity in all creatures and creation, and as such they form the body of God. God therefore is experienced in all His fullness and infinity in the heart. This is a slow process, however, and therefore we find in the *Tiruvāymoḻi* decades of hymns of close intimate experience of God, followed by decades of hymns speaking about the loss of the presence and the vision. The alternations are by no means mere poetic devices but based on the concentric progress or spiral progress that is being continuously maintained. The ultimate realisation that leads one to the transcendental sanctum (Vaikuṇṭha) reveals the glorious journey to Infinity. The mental visions become

more and more objective vision and the *divya-pratyakṣa* becomes the culmination of the spiritual journey.

It is because of the richness of mystic religious experiences studded in the whole work, that this work and its saintly author have been acclaimed as the highest level of devotional attainment.

CHAPTER X

MADHURAKAVI

With St. Śathakopa South Indian mysticism reaches its highest point of expression in the language of intuition and vision.

The noblest of souls seem to have experienced the heights of spiritual truths owing to their work among the people spreading the love of God and awakening men to their high destiny. Religion seems to have become once again the sheet-anchor of human conduct, and all aspired for the direct experience of God. It is obviously one of the glorious events that led the poetic Madhurakavi or the Kavi of Madhura or the sweet-tongued poet to the feet of St. Śathakopa. Having seen the effulgence of St. Śathakopa from afar he wended his way to the source of the effulgence and reached the tamarind tree under which the saint was seated in absorption. Having put him a direct question seeking information as to what that saint was living by and where he is residing or resting he learnt that St. Śathakopa was eating God (enjoying God as his food) and resting in God.* This profound truth made Madhurakavi choose St. Śathakopa as his *guru*.

He learnt all the hymns of the great saint and followed the method of *bhakti* and *prapatti*, and is said to have reached a very high stage equivalent to that of the other Āḻvārs. The traditional accounts include him among the Āḻvārs though with a difference. While all other Āḻvārs enjoyed the Mystic Vision of God and His infinite auspicious attributes, Madhurakavi sang about the glory of

* This incident is mentioned under Āḻvār St. Śathakopa.

Āḻvār Śathakopa alone. Only one composition of this great devotee of the Āḻvār survives.

A translation of his only surviving composition, named *Kaṇṇinum Śiruttāmbu* is given below:

1. Leaving the great wonderful Lord father who permitted Himself to be bound by the many-knotted short piece of cord by the gentle damsel (Yaśoda) seeking refuge in the Seer of Kurukūr, if one recites his name, then the tongue trained to taste from beginningless time inferior enjoyments, will begin to taste nectar.
2. Praising him with my tongue (have I) gained the Good: attained his golden feet: verily I know of no other Godhead (except my Āḻvār). Sweetly singing the hymns of the friend of Kurukūr shall I wander.
3. Wandering thus I have attained the vision of the form of the blue-hued Lord of the Gods with the beautiful Śrī (Viṣṇu). This indeed is the gain that I have got by devoting myself to the Āḻvār of Kurukūr City.
4. Verily am I deemed as wretched by the very well-versed in the four Vedas. Therefore is Śathakopa, who is my mother and father and ruler, the abolisher of my sorrows.

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1. Kurukūr is otherwise Āḻvār Tiru-nagari. It is the original name before St. Śathakopa was born there. *Śiruttambu* is small cord and the reference is to devotion which is of the form of a small cord capable of binding the world-enveloping Godhead Viṣṇu, Wonder of wonders.
2. Ācārya worship leads to God-realization. Ācārya realization is God-realization. Ācārya indeed is the small cord that binds the Infinite Divine. Service of the true illumined Ācārya is service of God pleasing to Him.
4. Worship of the Master of Tamil Wisdom, and devotion to the Saint of a lower caste (*māran*) meant the loss of respect from

5. Previously had I desired the supreme self-realisation of the transcendent Lord: and desired too chaste ladies (for wife). But now having sought refuge with love in the Āḻvār of Kurukūr of golden and shining mansions, I have become a realised soul.
6. From now on and in future my Master has favoured me with the command to sing His excellent qualities. Behold! the Āḻvār of the mountain girt Kurukūr of big mansions is looking at me at all times (showering His grace on me).
7. My Master Āḻvār who belongs to the Kāri family seeing me, accepting me as disciple, and abolishing my age-long sins has displayed his love (for me). Wherefore I proclaim aloud the love of Śathakopa alone who sang in Tamil so that persons in all diverse directions (in Tamil land) may hearken (to the same).
8. The Āḻvār who has adored the love of God, proclaimed with joy the (occult) meaning of the Vedas (the authority of all). You have seen the love of that lover of God who has sung on Him thousand essenceful hymns in Tamil: in this world they are verily beyond comparison.

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the *Veda* knowers to whose caste Madhurakavi belonged. But the love of the Ācārya has more than compensated this. He has become all.

7. The Master should accept a disciple and his acceptance of a disciple is a careful one and demands a dedicated view on the part of the disciple, who should seek the abolition of *anādi karma* (beginningless *karma* and its effects). Master loves the disciple more than the disciple loves him, for it is a matter of grace.
8. Śathakopa according to Madhurakavi taught the inner and essential meaning of the *Vedas* and therefore his *tirumoḻi* is called *Drāviḍa Vedam*. Divine Song is the other meaning of

9. He (Āḻvār) having sung the esoteric meaning of the *Vedas* of the eminent Brāhmans fixed them well in my mind. Integral loving service of him alone is the adequate offering to my Master Śathakopa.
10. Though there is no gain for thee (from us), though we are unwilling to listen to the good, yet by thine actions hast thou trained us well fully, O Āḻvār of Kurukūr girt with gardens resounding with koil cries and thine songs! I seek thine excellent (holy) feet out of love for thee.
11. In these songs by the devoted Madhurakavi on his master of beautiful Kurukūr, who is the lover of all those who have sought refuge at the feet of the lover of all (GOD) those who have faith will verily attain the Highest abode (Vaikuṇṭha).

Like Madhurakavi, Nāthamuni (Ranganātha Muni) was attracted to the life and poetry of St. Śathakopa. His deep interest in the hymns of St. Śathakopa was aroused when he was visiting some of the temples where they were being sung. But he could not get at all the hymns

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Veda (*divyaprabandham*). It is to spread the teaching of the Divine Veda that he out of love sang in the language of the people.

9. Man should reveal his return love to the Master by devotional service and spread the message everywhere. This is the necessity to wander and wander far and wide to spread the good tidings.

10. God expects no return from us: he is not expecting any profit. This truth the Āḻvār showed in his own life by living for God and expecting to do nothing to Him except to be totally absorbed in Him. The absolute greatness of God and of the Ācārya are thus shown to be natural to them. The training (*śikṣa*) by the Teacher is loving, easy and yet complete thanks to the spiritual glory of His nature.

and so he undertook to collect them. It is also mentioned that Śrī Nāthamuni undertook strenuous practice of devotion and *prapatti* or surrender to St. Śathakopa, even though St. Śathakopa had passed away. In his Yogic experience St. Śathakopa gave him his vision *(darśana)* and also taught him all the hymns. He wrote them down in the form dictated to him by the departed saint. He then tried to get at other hymns sung by other Āḻvārs. He was enabled to collect almost all the entire collection which has come down to us.

His love for his *guru* was immense and he adored his *guru* as God Himself incarnate. In fact he claimed that his *guru* indeed founded the clan of Śrī Vaiṣṇavas, who belonged to all castes. He instructed the path of *yoga* to all his disciples. His own work on *yoga* is said to have been lost. But the basic ingredients of *yoga* have come down and are incorporated in the daily duties of all Śrī Vaiṣṇavas *(nityam)* written by Śrī Rāmānuja long afterwards.

The great work of the *Ācāryas* started. The mystic revelational period was succeeded by the scholastic philosophic period whose brightest luminaries were Yāmunācārya, Rāmānuja, Vedānta Deśika, Pillai Lokācārya and Manavālamahāmuni. Śrī Rāmānuja however founded the great spiritual empire ruled by giants of spiritual calibre known as the 74 leaders who spread the teachings of the Āḻvārs and the *Ācāryas* among all peoples. Bhakti became not merely an emotional means but a philosophical discipline at the hands of these Ācāryas.*

* cf. *Aspects of Bhakti*, 3rd lecture (University of Mysore Letcures in 1954).

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